

ITALY AND FASCISMO



Lincoln

ITALY AND FASCISMO

by Luigi Sturzo

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P R E F A C E

THIS book provides for the English reader a careful analysis of the historical process which has led to the overthrow of the Italian Constitution and the elevation of a dictator 'trampling', as he himself expresses it, 'on the rotting corpse of Liberty'. It is written by Don Sturzo, a Catholic priest, and at the same time leader of the *Partito Popolare*, a party founded in 1919 to support a Wilsonian and League of Nations policy, opposing both Reaction and Revolution. The writer is now in exile; his name is said to have been down on the condemned list as the next victim after Matteotti; and, like Professor Salvemini, he is sometimes commended by Fascist newspapers to the special attention of any assassins who happen to be idle in England. One who realizes all that this means will find it easier to admire than to imitate the moderation and the calm reflective insight with which Don Sturzo analyses symptom by symptom, the crises which have led Italy to its present pass. It is the tone of a dispassionate and Christian philosopher. There is no touch of the embittered exile. And though English readers may not always agree with his point of view, they will certainly find it interesting and instructive.

To an educated Englishman, especially to one who has been concerned either with politics or with history, it seems amazing that a great nation should allow all its free institutions to be destroyed, and itself to be dominated by gangs of young roughs armed with bludgeons and castor-oil bottles, belonging to a private society whose members are above the law. But one must allow for the terror of

Bolshevism which 'maddens even the wise'. One must remember that Italy is politically very different from England. Free institutions have no deep roots in Italian history. The Italian cities, when they wished to change their governments, regularly did so, as G. M. Trevelyan has put it not by votes but 'by a row in the market-place'. And many parts of Italy have long been accustomed to the rule of private extra-legal societies like the Camorra, the Maffia or the Black Hand. The Fascist Society is only a Camorra on a grand scale. But Don Sturzo enables us to understand step by step, how the thing has happened. Despotism has come because free institutions have failed. The governing classes failed in their duty and their power of government. The liberalism of the Risorgimento lost itself in morasses of impotence and intrigue. The War brought confusion, both social and economic. The Italian people, so gifted in all regions of art and of intellect, somehow lost grip of the steady and humdrum duties which constitute citizenship, and political power fell a prey to the group that was most violent and most ready to face risks and to take trouble. 'The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.' Free institutions will not work unless the people as a whole are ready to live up to them. They will not work unless there is some degree of stability in the social organism and a certain standard of civic virtue in the individual citizen. They will not work unless, on the whole, people are honest and trust one another.

Freedom in Europe is not secure. We need not flatter ourselves that it is. Free institutions are still on their trial, or rather the peoples are on their trial to see whether they are capable of freedom. Let me take two incidents, both typical, one from a free community and one from a despotism. The nation that accustoms itself to the first type of behaviour is preparing itself for the second.

A short time ago in a certain English-speaking community, there was a coalition government consisting

partly of an Agricultural Party and partly of a party that we will call X. The agriculturals had based their electoral programme on Railway Reform, including a sweeping reduction of freights and other aids to agriculture which most people thought economically impossible. When the government was being framed, the agricultural leader said to the X leader : 'You must take railways.' 'Why', said the other : 'that is surely your special job'. 'You see', said the farmers' leader, 'we have got all that programme, which we can't carry out. So, if you don't mind, you take the Ministry of Railways and I will explain that we cannot propose our bill because you do not agree.'

Not exactly a crime? Hardly even surprising. In idiomatic English it would perhaps be described as 'a bit thick', in philosophical language as a profound unconscious and fundamental dishonesty. It is typically the sort of auto-intoxication which is common in all third-rate uneducated democracies and which undermines the health of parliamentary institutions. People who behave like that may not be very wicked, but they are not capable of freedom.

The other type of story has been unrolling itself before the eyes of Europe, while this book was in the press. We may take two phases of it. Signor Amendola, leader of the parliamentary opposition in Italy, a man who has been blamed for a moderation verging upon timidity, but never for any baser or more provocative fault, has just died from the effects of the second of two savage bludgeonings inflicted on him in public by Fascist ruffians, whom the police—though they happened to be looking on at the time—have been unable to identify. Signor Matteotti, the fiery and courageous leader of the Moderate Socialists, having been murdered in June, 1924 by persons high in the confidence of the Dictator, it has at last been found desirable to hold a mock trial in order to give absolution and public thanks to the murderers. No element of fraud was lacking ; and lest any judge should by accidental obtuseness mistake the Government's wishes, the defence was

entrusted to the Secretary-General of the Fascist Party, who has since been presented with a special 'robe of justice' worked by noble Fascist ladies, as a reward for his skill. The Matteotti trial will probably remain for some generations a classic model of the perfect perversion of justice.

There have doubtless been worse crimes than this, perpetrated by the Fascist despotism, as by the Bolshevik or the Czarist despotism. 'Fascism tolerates no differences of opinion : its block is monolithic.' And since by nature human beings do sometimes differ, those who differ must be silenced or destroyed.

Outside Italy, Mussolini is largely regarded as a theatrical performer, and Fascism, with its hysteria and its frizzed hair, as a subject for jests. But the farce is a desperately dangerous, as well as a cruel one. Consider such stuff as the following :¹ 'A Fascist Catechism. There are Ten Commandments. 1. I am Italy, thy mother, thy sovereign, thy goddess. 2. Thou shalt have no mother, sovereign nor goddess above me. 3. Thou shalt honour her god and keep her festivals. . . .' The name of the god is not given, but can be guessed. Or this from an official Fascist journal : 'As to Africa, we ought to make a push to the right and a push to the left, with Tripoli as a pivot, laying hands on Tunis on the one side, with a bit of Morocco, and on Egypt on the other, with a bit of Nubia, linking up with our Red Sea possessions by the way of the Nile.' Then some more about Asia Minor ; and then 'we should have something to say about Europe'. Or again the posters and postcards proclaiming the revived Roman Empire with Mussolini as Caesar, and the gathering in of poor distracted France 'under the wing of her Roman mother' ; even phrases *totidem verbis* about Italy's 'place in the Sun' and her 'future upon the sea'. The self-same spirit of *Hubris* which another despotic ruler is now expiating in exile, the same style of language, the same neurotic excitement, the same grandiose vagueness of outline, even—

¹ See *Review of Reviews*, Feb.-March, March-April and May-June, 1926.

curiously enough—the same instinctive cowardice which titubates at the last moment and does not dare to be definite.

William II's Empire was far stronger than Italy, and he never spoke words quite so megalomaniac as these. Yet his madness was too much for his strength, and led his people, blundering and intoxicated, towards their bath of blood. Every true friend of Italy must pray that some gentler wisdom, some saner patriotism, some spark of that spirit of brotherhood which is at last, however slowly and timidly, permeating the other nations of Europe, may arise in time to save from the ultimate tragedy a nation so gifted and so beloved.

So far as I can read Don Sturzo's mind, it is in that hope that this book has been written.

G. M.

May 1926.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEMS OF THE RISORGIMENTO

§ 1. *Freedom and Nationality*

ONE of the most difficult and arduous undertakings ever achieved by a modern people was the unification of Italy under a free constitution with complete independence from foreign rule. The history of the Italian *Risorgimento* is bound up with that of Europe and was especially influenced by political developments in England and France. For the movement which brought about Italian freedom not only coincided with the awakening of liberalism throughout Europe after the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna, but it could never have achieved any tangible result if two new ideas had not been abroad in the political world: the principle of nationality, the principle of liberty. These two ideas—for the sake of which the more generous faced exile and death, and which aroused a romantic ferment in all the peoples of Europe, then victims of a most oppressive and suspicious *régime* of despotism and police surveillance—represented the imperative need of the people as a whole for a new order, economic, political, and international.

The conflict between the principle of legitimacy and authority, as restated at Vienna, and the need for a political development which would take into account the middle classes who had come to the fore as the expression of a new social force, had to find a natural solution. This consisted,

on the one hand, in the removal of economic fetters—already thrown off by the new activity of industry and commerce—and, on the other, in the overthrow of class and caste privileges, which were bound up with despotic power. Political freedom was thus both effect and cause of economic freedom.

The mistake of the absolute governments of that time lay in their incomplete understanding of this close and indissoluble connection. The abolition of feudalism, under the influence of the French Revolution, and the abolition of the privileges of the Arts and Crafts Guilds led to the abolition of mortmain, entail, fiscal immunities and privileges, and the internal customs barriers. And the abolition of these cut away the economic base of the privileges of castes and corporations, while at the same time the development of industry, the greater rapidity of trade and the economic need for the displacement of large numbers of workers undermined the foundations of serfdom. The new economy called for an order of freedom in which all citizens should be equal before the law and none claim special privileges, and as a natural consequence it was bound to culminate in an elective system giving to such citizens direct representation and access to all public offices.

The people feel unconsciously the logic of events. If they are sometimes carried to excesses through incomplete and inexact comprehension, or led away by passion or the attempt to overcome real or imaginary obstacles, they have always a deep sense of reality and a capacity for forming practical syntheses of events which makes them feel the underlying significance of social changes. It was thus not so much through the outward urge of a few men, who were considered as unpractical visionaries, as by inward ferment among the people that Europe between 1815 and 1848 felt the need for a change in her forms of political expression, because the elements of economic structure and standards of values were in process of evolution and modification.

But among those peoples who had neither maintained nor regained their unity and independence, this ferment received a more potent force and a more certain value from the ideal of nationality. The Italians were among those who suffered most from foreign rule. Divided into several States, Italy lay under the moral and material yoke of Austria. Under Austrian dominion were the provinces of Lombardy, the three Venetias (Venice, Tridentina, Giulia), Fiume, and the Duchy of Mantua. Austria maintained armies in Ferrara, Parma and Piacenza, Reggio and Modena. The ruling houses of Parma and Piacenza, of Reggio and Modena were both Austrian ; so were those of Tuscany and Lucca. Other regions of Italy were ruled by despotic princes under the most pronounced Austrian influence, Piedmont by the house of Savoy, Naples and Sicily by the Bourbons.

Rome, with Bologna, the Marches and Romagna, formed the temporal domain of the Popes, and even the Popes, after the Congress of Vienna, could not break away from Austrian influence, as Pius IX proved when, partially and in vain, he essayed to do so in the first years of his pontificate.

Theoretically the principle of independence could be held by all Italians, whether liberal or not, because in itself it did not imply any question of *régime* ; but the principle of legitimacy invoked by Austria could only be opposed in the name of the principle of nationality. And this, in its true and full significance, meant also self-determination, self-government, economic and political freedom, and the overthrow of all repressive and despotic systems.

From this point of view, over and above the difficulties accompanying every movement of national liberation, Italy had special problems of her own.

First, she had to face in Austria a dominant and triumphant power. And Austria in view of the issue of the Napoleonic wars, needed Italy to maintain her international poise ; for Italy allowed her to influence the Mediterranean

and to maintain her hegemony with regard to the other German peoples.

Secondly, Italy had to define the position of the Pope, who for nearly a thousand years had exercised civil power over Rome and various peoples of Central Italy. Catholics throughout the world and the European governments considered the Temporal Power to be not only a religious but a political necessity, although many hoped to see opportune reforms in the administration of the Papal states.

Thirdly, means had to be found to overcome the mutual mistrust of the different regions and States of an Italy that had never been wholly united in a single kingdom nor ever achieved national consciousness.

To the Liberalism of the *Risorgimento* fell the task of facing and solving these three most grave problems, of solving them in the name of *Independence*, of *Liberty*, and of *Unity*.

§ 2. *The Liberalism of the Risorgimento*

“The Liberalism of the *Risorgimento*” is usually taken to include all the many different currents that sought to end absolutism, to reform the *régime* in a representative sense, and to achieve some form of national unity. It thus applies equally to the activities of the genuine Liberals and the Democrats, to the moderate or conservative Liberals and to the Catholic Liberals, also known as Neo-Guelphs. The whole of the reform movement which, as time went on, drew to itself various more or less ill-defined currents and men with vague ideas on liberty and free constitutions, was known and understood as Liberal. Independence from foreign rule was likewise considered Liberalism, and even the bland reforms of enlightened rulers of the Eighteenth Century type were liberal in colour and import.

But all these currents, whether the romantic and federalist

neo-Guelfs, whose standard-bearers were Father Ventura, Rosmini, Balbo and Gioberti, or the real Liberals of the type of Cavour, or the Democrats who, inspired by Mazzini, found expression in Direct Action, all, in spite of deep-seated divergence and essential differences, helped to start a real movement of revolutionary liberalism which, breaking through the walls of caste, dynastic and economic traditions, local and regional prejudices, ecclesiastic rights, religious differences, might have ended as well in a Federation of Italian States under Pope or Monarch as in a Republic. It cannot be said that there was a liberal school of thought specifically Italian, for the questions of unity and national independence dominated those of liberty. The moderates who, more than the rest, guided middle-class opinion, were very circumspect with regard to political liberties and had no clear vision of liberal economics—they were, in reality, Conservatives dressed up as Revolutionaries. But the special character of the Liberalism of the Risorgimento is not to be found in the systems of the theorists—who held no independent position in the general current of contemporary European thought—but, over and above systems, theories, and discussions, in the effort to give practical expression to the aspirations of an élite, who may be considered the political class of their time.

It is easy to see how the greatest difficulty lay in co-ordinating the various forces on a single plane and in combining their divergent and often conflicting activities in a practical programme. The conflict between those who believed in secret societies and popular risings and those who trusted instead in the moral efficacy of ideals and reforms was certainly serious ; yet in the period from 1815 to 1846 both were able to test how little their movements responded to reality, in that they were not yet able to create a general state of mind favourable to liberalism, nor to arouse confidence in their efforts in the minds of the people.

On the other hand the retrograde, absolutist and Austrophile party was losing ground, and thus leaned all the more strongly, on Austria for political and military strength, and for moral strength on the Church, in the belief that Throne and Altar should give each other mutual support. The link between the Papacy, the Italian States, and Austria, which originated in the Treaty of Vienna, was a political and diplomatic factor of extreme importance and not easily overcome. And this link was made closer and more effective by memories of the French Revolution, the French occupation and wars, which had left throughout the people a deep furrow of financial trouble, misery and unrest. The rural population and a good part of the small shop-keeping and artisan class had need of calm and peace in which to recover from so many years of war, and they did not feel the force of the new ideals.

The wide-spread need for calm and peace among the working populations was reflected even more by the clergy and by the country clergy especially, untouched as they were by the innovating currents and occupied with their religious duties ; by an easy transition, believing that this need could best be satisfied by absolute respect for the established order, they gave to that order their confident support. These elements formed the zone of conservation and immobility—of unquestionable value as making for gradual social development ; but liable at a time of great political movements to become an obstacle and a hindrance.

Actually, however, this wide zone of conservatism was never a real obstacle to the spread of liberal impulses from the towns. The masses remained inert, distrustful, here and there hostile, but without conviction ; in the minds of the people there were subconscious workings of prejudice and sentiment which remained undirected till the towns had established their predominance over the countryside, and the liberal current penetrated monastery and seminary and the small centres of provincial culture ; it was then

that the idea of Italy as a political entity began to spread, and liberal ideals to penetrate vaguely the minds of the people. This change was the result of two important events : the wide diffusion of the ideal of nationality by Abbé Gioberti's famous book *The Primacy of Italy* and the election to the Papal throne of Pius IX, who began the official acts of his reign with the celebrated phrase : ' May God bless Italy ', and an amnesty for political offences.

The wave of enthusiasm thus started throughout Italy indicated a state of mind that was already making itself felt. The ferment of the new ideas was mingled with the most ill-assorted sentiments ; but, in the meantime, the conviction was growing among the people that the national ideals could in some way be realized. The risings of 1848, the liberal constitutions granted by the rulers of various States, including Rome, the declaration by Piedmont of the first war of Independence, in which the Governments of Florence, Rome, Naples and Palermo, were driven by the will of the people to take part, were the effects of an explosion of romantic and popular feeling wholly Italian. These events differed from those at the time of the French Revolution in that they could not be said to be reflections of what had happened in Paris or Vienna ; they sprang from movements that were largely independent, though having their place in the setting of general European unrest and the current of liberal thought and aspirations.

Disaster followed. The war with Austria, embarked upon with insufficient preparation and inadequate equipment, turned out badly ; the other Governments, brought by circumstances into conjunction with Piedmont, were wavering and distrustful and finally withdrew ; the volunteers had nothing save courage and generosity ; the Parliaments soon fell under the dominance of demagogues and the mob. As a result the moderate Liberals, the real promoters of the Revolution, came to fear the social movements of the masses, and saw a necessity in the return of the old governments, in the name of order and

property. The last struggles of the Republics of Venice and of Rome marked the greatest possible effect of the two political types that had blossomed with the revolution, that of the moderate liberals in Venice, and that of the democrats and common people in Rome ; they fell before the arms of Austria and France.

And yet, throughout the general discouragement and popular distrust that followed the romantic phase of '48, despite the return of Austria and drastic reaction on the part of every government in the peninsula, two forces remained in being ; the Monarchy of Savoy (which would not repudiate the constitution and prepared for what was afterwards known as the *Conquista Regia*, the Royal Conquest) and the liberal exiles from every region, who, by the sacrifice of themselves, were able to maintain the cult of Italian ideals. The liberalism of the new and unified State was born in the catastrophe of 1848.

§ 3. *Italian Unity and the Constitutional Régime*

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 had willed that throughout the continent of Europe no *real* constitution should remain standing. The English Parliament appeared, from the continental point of view, too insular, too ancient and feudal to be a danger, for the Reform Bill had yet to become the centre of European aspirations. The French Parliament continued to exist and had a certain importance, but the reactionary currents overwhelmed it. The Sicilian Parliament, re-established in 1812, while not formally abolished, was never again summoned, and in any case the reunion of the Two Sicilies in a single kingdom under Bourbon rule made it unlikely that Sicily, subject to a harshly repressive *régime* of police surveillance, would signal the resurrection of the revolutionary ideas which were believed to be gone for ever.

Now, with the fall of the constitutions of 1848 in all the countries under Austrian domination or influence,

that of Piedmont alone remained standing, and, in spite of the defeat at Novara and the abdication of Carlo Alberto, in spite of the pressure brought to bear by victorious Austria upon the little kingdom in the form of cajolery and threats—not to speak of the counsel of other Powers that the new King should abandon the liberal cause and abolish the constitution—Victor Emmanuel answered that the House of Savoy did not go back on its given word. He signed the exacting terms of the armistice, but the tricolour, the flag of the new Italy, he would not give up.

And when even France, after the *coup d'état* of 2 December, 1851, took definitely the path of reaction, so that it could be said that, save for England, the whole of Europe had gone back to despotism, Piedmont remained steadfastly true to her constitution; and the fulfilment of her liberal ideas, together with the monarchic conception that was to extend to the whole of Italy, was even more pronounced under the government of a man of genius, Camillo Benso di Cavour.

It was in this period, between 1849 and 1861, that the idea of an Italian nation was identified with that of a single and unitary kingdom, and the federal idea, which in the preceding period had had sturdy champions and a considerable following, was abandoned. At the same time the current of hostility towards the temporal power grew more pronounced when Pius IX, brought back to Rome by the arms of France and Austria, adopted a bearing of close alliance with absolutism and antagonism towards any sort of constitutional reform. Even the Sicilians, who had once toyed with the idea of political autonomy, had now to a great extent come round to the idea of a single kingdom, and even the Venetians who, with Daniel Manin and the Republic of '48, had retrieved the dishonour of their ignominious fall in 1797, recognized that the salvation and future of Italy depended on an effectual unity. And whereas Piedmont had been looked upon before 1848 with suspicion or mistrust by the other regions of Italy, especially

by the Republicans, who were then of considerable strength, and by the other extremists under the influence of Mazzini, in this next period the few who amid the general disillusionment and mistrust believed in the destiny of their country, pinned their hopes on Piedmont, on the strength of her constitution and the liberties there affirmed and defended.

It is often said that the union of Italy was only the result of fortunate circumstances, that between 1859 and 1870 there were in Europe eleven years of change which Piedmont was able to turn to good account, and that the new Italy was made by outside events, not by a national consciousness among the people. But no great political change is ever without an element of the unforeseen, or contingent. The victory of Marengo or the defeat of Waterloo were not the results only of courage or strategy or of the political situation, but psychological states and even weather conditions concurred to make them what they were, and to lend them fateful significance. On the other hand, circumstances will not bring about certain political results if the ground has not been prepared beforehand. Napoleon III was the main factor in bringing about the war of 1859 against Austria, but he would never have been so without Cavour and without a constitutional Piedmont. It was difficult to unite Rome with Italy, but the opportunity for doing so in 1870 when the Franco-German war brought about the withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, could never have been turned to account if the new kingdom had not long been making political preparation for the fall of the temporal power.

Thus, while no one can deny that fortunate circumstances helped in the formation of the new Kingdom, it must be recognized that these would have been of no avail without the work of preparation on the part of the liberal and constitutional movement that had raised up men of proved worth and political greatness, such as Mazzini and Cavour, and had aroused the enthusiasm of the people in the names of Gioberti, Pius IX and Garibaldi.

Looking backward, we can link together these names which then represented antithetical ideals, not only in the political and practical fields but also in the theoretical and religious; for all contributed to direct various currents towards the formation of the new State. The man, however, who became the active and deciding factor, knowing how to use the divers conflicting forces, was Count Cavour. He and Victor Emmanuel II won Italy to Piedmont, so that Italian unity can be historically and politically considered as the 'Piedmontization' of Italy. This was what was known as the 'Royal Conquest', to indicate, as it were, the work of the Monarchy of Savoy in using the revolutionary movements of the middle classes, the Garibaldianism of the young and the Mazzinianism of the Republicans, in order to extent its domain; leaning the while on the conservative classes which carried through the revolution in liberal guise, yet by compromise were able to avoid the creation of positions too sharply defined. In reality, Italian unity was obtained too suddenly by a people for centuries divided and heterogeneous. Liberty, preserved as a torch in the little country of Piedmont, was rather given as a gift than won by the efforts of the people; and nationality, affirmed as self-determination and self-government by an élite, did not find an equal echo in the popular consciousness.

Italy had, therefore, as it were, to retrace her steps, to face the difficulties confronting a great State recently formed and not wholly homogeneous in structure, and to create a national soul for a whole people which till then had only enjoyed brief illusions of free government in some of the former Italian States, but had never felt a central force and a spirit of unity. So that Massimo d'Azeglio spoke truly when he said 'We have made Italy, now we must make Italians !'

The formidable task of making real a government freshly established in a land of twenty-two million inhabitants who were united for the first time, became, in the face

of hostility and distrust on the part of foreign powers and of open conflict with the Holy See, almost more serious than even the conquest of national unity had been. Added to this, a section of the population, the legitimists and Catholics on the one hand, the Republicans on the other, would have no part in the new order of things, while the opinion was wide-spread that the new *régime* would soon collapse amid ruin and disaster. Memories of the Italian States under Napoleon I, were still alive, and that making and unmaking of States and principalities too fresh in the minds of the people; and, though the course of events was not such as to warrant alarm or pessimism, there existed a state of mind only to be overcome when, with the lapse of time, the State should be better established, the population fused into a coherent whole and a solution found for outstanding problems.

A small ruling political class such as that of Piedmont, which had taken the lead in the unitary movement, could not suffice for this work; nor could the class drawn from the survivors of two generations of Liberals belonging to every part of the country—men tried in prison, in exile and in wars, but who had had no opportunity of gaining a comprehensive outlook on Italy and on the problems confronting the new State. Nor was there at that time any real middle class to serve as backbone of the country's economic structure and to give expression to its new political life. Industry was still in its infancy, commerce hampered by customs barriers, the railways, save in Piedmont and Lombardy, undeveloped, agriculture and home industries primitive and localized. A seething political life in the towns was represented by men from the liberal professions—a mixture of rhetoric and legal culture, of sentimentality and intellect, of improvisation and brilliance, of personal and moral worth and of place-mongering and demagoguery—in short, there was a lack of the maturity required for a great policy adequate to the needs of the time. The old humanistic education, with

its juridical traditions and general economic and political culture, helped, to some extent, to make up for the general unpreparedness and for defects due to the novelty of the situation. In reality, it was still an élite of moderate Liberal intellectuals, who, having improvised the Italian nation, took on themselves the burden of creating the Italian State.

Another weak point lay in the international situation. The new Italy came as it were by surprise into the European balance, breaking away from French influence by the well-nigh legendary expedition of Garibaldi and his Thousand, after Austria had been obliged to cede her Lombardy. Then she obtained Venice from Austria and took Rome in the teeth of both Austria and France. She affirmed her existence, just at a time when France was struggling in the reaction against Napoleon III, the war with Germany, and the convulsions of the Commune, when Germany was organizing herself as an Empire with a form of government representative but not liberal, when feudal Spain was divided between rival claimants to the throne and military groups, when Austria with a bad grace, was undergoing a bastard constitutionalization, and only the little States such as Belgium, Holland and Switzerland could be said to have accepted constitutional reform and liberal principles. Italy as a nation, as a unitary State under a liberal and constitutional *régime*, came forward in a new rôle and with a political position anticipating that of continental Europe when, after 1870 and through various vicissitudes, save in Russia and Turkey, the last traces of absolutist reaction were obliterated.

In all these innovations the England of 1832 had no small part morally and politically; the theories of her statesmen, the attitude of her ministers, the influence of the 'Manchester School', the advent of big industry, and her expansion on the seas, marked the triumph of the liberal idea over absolutism and conservatism, and of democracy over systems of feudalism and police surveillance. This

movement of ideas and interests spread abroad a more practical and less demagogic political ideal, a serener and less tumultuous public action; and this created in diplomatic circles even towards Italy a favourable disposition overcoming the formidable opposition of legitimist parties, reactionary tendencies and international jealousies.

§ 4. *Church and State*

One of the gravest difficulties in securing unity among Italians lay in the conflict between the new State and the Holy See. The problem was two-fold, one generic and present in an almost identical form in every State, the other specific and peculiar to Italy. The first consisted in the opposition, both theoretical and practical, of certain Liberal principles to the religious postulates of Catholicism. Freedom of the Press and of worship presupposed a State indifferent to any public affirmation contrary to the Catholic Faith and its institutions, and even, and not seldom, to Christian morals. Moreover, since Liberal theories affirmed the juridical and moral superiority of the State over the Church, the tendency grew up to carry to its ultimate logical consequence the tradition known as State jurisdictionalism, implying that the State should have power over ecclesiastical institutions, such as religious communities, marriage, pious foundations, parish schools, benefices, and ecclesiastical appointments—over all the public activities and ordering of the Church as it then existed with the old limitations of investiture and government intervention.

This situation was not new in Europe ; it had formed part of a movement for the reform of the relations between Church and State which aimed at the separation of the two powers, but which actually meant the putting of the State over the Church. In France, Napoleon I settled the bitter anti-religious strife of the Great Revolution by the Concordat of 1801 ; in the Nineteenth Century, however, the conflict was several times renewed, sometimes growing

acute, sometimes conducted with tolerance, till it culminated at the opening of the present century in the repudiation of the Concordat and the laws on the separation of the Church and State and the laws on Associations.

Several modern States, even those in which the Catholic religion does not predominate, have followed the course of establishing concordats and diplomatic representation between the Vatican and the individual State. But this was not possible for Italy either in the period of the Risorgimento or after the formation of the unitary State. For, over and above the ordinary questions of relations between Church and State common to all countries, the very fact of Italian unification brought with it the dispute over temporal power. Even before the taking of Rome on 20 September, 1870, the Italian Parliament had in 1861 proclaimed Rome the capital of Italy and cautiously directed all its policy to this end, while the republicans, the parties of the Left and the Garibaldians raised the question by popular tumults and armed incursions. On the fall of the temporal power, with the taking of Rome by the Italian troops, the Plebiscite of October, 1870, gave popular sanction to the union of Rome with Italy. In 1871 the capital was transferred to the centre of the Catholic world, after the passing of what is known as 'The Law of Guarantees' which determined the legal position of the Supreme Pontiff in the new Kingdom.

The Popes, however, never acknowledged this law and raised the very serious problem of the independence and liberty of the Holy See, feeling themselves unable to ratify the *faits accomplis* or to recognize in the law passed by a particular State a guarantee for an universal religious ministry.

This attitude on the part of the Holy See on the one hand intensified the hostility of liberal and extremist elements, to the extent of creating moral antagonism and a tendency towards the secularization of the State. On the other, it made successive governments adopt a suspicious and

defensive policy, fearing lest the question should be raised by any foreign State that might be in open or latent conflict with Italy. In consequence the pronouncedly Catholic currents, both the intransigents—temporalists or clericals—and the national Catholics who, however, could not join in a struggle between State and Church, refrained from taking any part in political life. A contribution of moral strength and personal activity which would have been most useful in the establishment of the new order was thus withdrawn, making it more difficult to effect a unity of hearts round the new State. In the period between the birth of the Italian kingdom and the Great War, the religious dispute passed through various phases, now acute, now tolerable and even imperceptible ; and in that long lapse of time many events supervened to lessen the tension. The peril of the dismembering of the Italian State by foreign intervention on behalf of the Holy See, once considered a possibility, proved, with time, to be non-existent. The last moment of uneasiness and hostility on this account, which made Sonnino insert Article 15 in the Treaty of London, was shown to be altogether groundless when Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State of Benedict XV, declared during the war that the Holy See looked for the recognition of its independence and religious liberty not from a Foreign Power but from the Italians themselves. The private discussions with a view to finding a solution of this most difficult problem, such as those of 1887 under Leo XIII, and which have recurred from time to time in more recent years during the tranquil period of indirect relations, show that the question, though still unsolved, is yet historically defined as ruling out any conflict in the political field while remaining open in a field strictly religious.

Therefore, after several attenuations, even the phase of the abstention of Catholics from public life came to an end. Forty-nine years after the taking of Rome, Catholics, who till then had remained outside the public life of Italy,

formed a political party, non religious but with a programme inspired by Christian ethics, and came forward as a democratic current under the name of the Italian Popular Party (18 January, 1919). On 10 November of the same year the formula of the *Non Expedit* by which, since 1867, Catholics had been advised to take no part in political elections, was allowed to lapse, and thus, after half a century, the political unity of Italians under the new kingdom was finally achieved. The religious question of the independence of the Papacy, the cause of dissension between the Italian State and the Holy See, nevertheless remains unsolved in its essential terms. In the very nature of those terms the difficulty of finding an adequate solution may lie, rather than in lack of goodwill on either side—a reason, perhaps for entrusting to time what the wisdom of men fails to achieve.

§ 5. *Internal Conditions*

The Roman question was one aspect of the extremely difficult position of the new kingdom. It was then so acute as to form, as it were, the central point round which difficulties and policies gravitated. Connected with it were the anti-clerical, republican, and Garibaldian currents, and the wave of secularist and positivist thought that crept into the new cultural atmosphere, either in imitation of the countries North of the Alps or in intellectual reaction against the compressions and restrictions of the fallen governments. And all this was seething and finding political expression round the feeble existence of the new State and Parliament.

The death of Cavour in 1861 left no man to take his place, no one with his authority, his clear-sightedness or his firm hand ; as a result, the disintegrating elements in the State gained in strength and the elements of cohesion found difficulty in establishing themselves. Had not the national feeling binding together the greater number of

Italians been very sound, the new-born Italy would have been shaken by worse convulsions still.

One of the worst mistakes of the time, which has had and will continue to have an injurious effect on the political and moral development of Italy, was the exaggerated conception of unification as synonymous with uniformity. No juridical or administrative tradition of any region was respected. Identical laws were imposed on all by Royal decree, identical bureaucratic systems and administrative formulas were applied from end to end of the peninsula, while officials with no local knowledge were sent to apply the new system to populations which did not understand it or rebelled, feeling that they had passed from one master to another. This process was known as the 'Piedmontization' of Italy; in fact, Piedmont behaved towards the different Italian regions as Prussia to the German States, establishing systems of political intransigence and bureaucratic oppression, that showed total incomprehension of the spirit of the peoples of the South and fed the tumultuous explosions of discontent and resistance among which the 'Palermo risings' and Southern 'Brigandage' have remained famous. The Southern problem is a problem primarily political. It has never been understood by the government and has remained a factor in the moral disunion in Italy. Moreover, the exaggerated uniformity of legislation and administration carried with it the political subjection of the Communes and Provinces to a State centralized on the French model. Local self-government was looked upon with distrust, and regional autonomy with pronounced aversion; it was thought that a revival of local life would impede the formation of a national spirit. Italy had been so divided and even dismembered that, according to the men of the time, the only way to hold her together and to promote a unitary sense among the masses was to put everything into the hands of a central political power, wiping out every form of decentralized autonomy, and doing away with everything

that recalled the past. Against this mistaken psychology a few clear-sighted men protested in vain. Italy was born under the centralizing spirit of Piedmont, and copied what France had done under both absolute monarchies and representative governments—albeit with a spirit and a history very different from those of Italy.

This system dried up the springs of local energy, those springs that had produced the men of the Risorgimento, and sapped the power of tradition, one of the greatest sources of moral strength a people can have. In view of this the Italy of to-day can have no other birth certificate than that of the Risorgimento ; her noblest tradition is of 1848. When the pioneers of liberalism had passed from the scene, most of the other men of Italy, now a kingdom, came forward as parvenus with a narrow outlook. Thus the first expression of the thought, literature, and art of that time was restricted and provincial, and the period in comparison with the great periods of the past, was known as that of *Italiotta*—‘Little Italy’. Those men had wished to cut away the roots of communal tradition and the vitality of the regions ; they had banished from the life of the new nation all those memories, religious and Catholic, which were bound up with the manifestations of Italian thought, tradition and art ; they had centralized all vitality in the Government which became the centre of intrigues and jobbery, and they failed to perceive that they had thrown away one of the vital forces of the new kingdom.

The general disorder was increased by the financial position of the State, by the economic situation of the country. The various Italian States had not recovered from the period of financial troubles left by the French occupation and Napoleonic Wars, when they had again to face wars and revolts and military occupations. The enormous cost of the Risorgimento loaded Piedmont with debt. The new unified State inherited the deficits of the various budgets of its component States. It was obliged, moreover, to spend money freely in bringing its administration into order

and in creating the army and navy necessary to safeguard its existence and development. Distrust of its stability restricted its credit. Hence, inevitably, a forced paper currency and enormous taxation. The Government attempted to find a remedy, and the name of the Minister of Finance, Quintino Sella, marks the greatest and most honest effort to effect the financial reconstitution of the State.

Financial difficulties were aggravated by the general economic conditions. The fall of the customs barriers between State and State, the displacement of the commercial centres, the difficulties of internal communications, the railway problem, the lack of sufficient number of public schools for the requirements of a population in large measure illiterate, caused economic depression. The liquidation of the religious properties confiscated by the State, failed, as usual, to yield the hoped-for revenue, and in order to meet Budget requirements it was found necessary to keep on the State lottery (against which there had been a campaign on moral grounds), to organize throughout the country the monopoly of tobacco and salt, and to increase the tax on flour.

In those years of stress Italy passed a hard test. In addition a striking disparity showed itself more and more between North and South. The initial difficulties once overcome, the North returned to a normal rhythm of labour and production, thanks to the fertility of its plains and to the superior quality of its earlier administration. Thus it began to undergo a promising industrial transformation and to feed the trade of the port of Genoa. Whereas the South, wrongly believed to be the Eldorado of Italy, underwent a crisis in its little local industries, was stricken through the destruction of the vineyards by phylloxera, saw its trade with France stopped by the friction between the two Governments, was lacking in water, roads, sanitary dwellings, schools, and was at the same time loaded with taxes and levies by an uncompre-

hending Government. In this grave crisis began the exodus of the rural population, which deserted entire countrysides to seek fortune in America or Tunis. This first wave of emigration depopulated the rural districts of the South. Yet it eliminated also causes of serious disorder which would otherwise have engendered lively revolts ; and it formed the beginning of that wide Italian permeation of North and South America which is one of the most striking phenomena of overseas emigration.

Emigration proved a palliative, not a solution of the Southern problem of which the economic gravity revealed itself to such an extent that big inquiries were set on foot and measures taken, though without attaining the desired result. For the evil was not only economic ; it lay deeper. It was a moral and political evil produced by many centuries of real oppression ; and, in several respects, not only was it not remedied but was rather aggravated by the constitution of the unitary kingdom.

The economic difficulties with which the country was struggling were a reason for the rapid growth of extremist parties and social movements which sometimes took on an anarchic and revolutionary character, obliging the Government to proceed to harsh acts of repression as in the case of the '*Fasci Siciliani*' formed by the Sicilian peasants of 1893. But the social and economic grievances existed—starvation wages, insanitary workers' dwellings, long hours, the feudal vexations suffered by the peasants, the wide diffusion of diseases contracted in the course of work, such as malaria and pellagra. The conservative trend of the State, which was still restricted to the tax-paying classes and the agrarian and professional currents, overlooked these factors, which, under the influence first of the socialism of France and then of that of Germany, were to create the Italian Socialist Party.

In 1876 under the stress of the hard economic conditions of the country the Government of the Right or moderate Liberals fell, and their place was taken by the Liberals

of the Left, who tried to relieve fiscal pressure on articles of popular consumption and to facilitate the development of Trade. Yet they made the enormous mistake, of protecting parasitic industries by the tariff of 1887, which marked the beginning of a policy injurious to the economic development of the country, and contributed to the formation round the State of a class of 'traffickers' who have unfortunately become ever more powerful and more exacting.

In spite of these and other grave economic set-backs, such as the banking crisis and the persistent budgetary deficit, it could be said that during the twenty years before the war the first and greatest effort of the country had been successfully made. In this period three advantageous conditions were attained : a balance of trade and payment was achieved thanks to the remittances of emigrants, freight charges and the inflow of foreign tourists ; the deficit in the State budget was overcome ; and public credit rose till it was possible to bring about the conversion of the interest on the National Debt. Half a century of sacrifice on the part of a hard-working, thrifty, and frugal people, and an almost constantly rigid financial administration, brought about the consolidation of the finances of the State, giving a surer impulse to the economy of the country. As we shall see, this promising equilibrium, obtained at the cost of so much self-sacrifice, suffered a mortal blow from the war.

§ 6. *Foreign and Colonial Politics*

After the annexation of Venice in 1866 and of the Pontifical States in 1870, the public mind was kept in a state of agitation by two different issues of foreign politics : on the one hand the fear lest a foreign power, in conflict with Italy and urged on by its clerical elements, should intervene to give back Rome to the Pope (which meant, principally, fear of France) ; on the other, the desire to

right the wrong suffered when the Venetian frontier was fixed so as to leave out Trent and Trieste which, with other bordering zones, formed unredeemed territory under the Hapsburgs. These two questions excited the imagination of the people and permitted Committees and groups to arrange lively and sometimes turbulent demonstrations which hampered the Government in its delicate task. The Government indeed, found itself isolated. It needed to create currents of feeling favourable to the new order and to participate, with a well-defined policy, in the European balance of power, so as to gain, in its turn, support and assistance. Diplomatic distrust of the new government was, however, considerable and not easily to be overcome; and, apart from ministerial ability, which was not always equal to the task, the difficulties of the situation were genuinely serious. Greatest of them all was the dualism which existed in Italy between public opinion and those who governed—a dualism that we shall find again on other occasions. Public opinion, formed by the anti-clerical, irredentist, and extremist currents that predominated, felt itself drawing nearer to France as France became more and more democratic, and nursed the idea of returning to the anti-Austrian policy of the Risorgimento. In the meantime the men in power—those of the Right up till 1876 and then those of the Left—were turning towards Germany and through her to Austria, because they thought a new struggle for the unredeemed lands would be difficult, and at the same time because they feared France, even the France of Gambetta, on account of the Roman question and of Tunis, which was a zone of Italian trade and colonization.

This internal uncertainty brought Italy without a programme to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where France and England obtained that there should be no mention of either Tunis or Cyprus, while Austria gained for herself Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus pressing ever more towards the Adriatic. But by Italy nothing was either

asked or obtained, neither in the Adriatic nor in Africa nor in the East, an attitude called the *policy of clean hands*. Italy had actually been urged by Berlin and London in 1876 to occupy Tunis, in 1877 to declare a protectorate over Albania, in 1878 to take Tripoli, and she had always declined to embark on doubtful and costly undertakings. All this was resented by those who wished the Government to carry on a policy of expansion and their ill humour was still more marked after the negative issue of the Berlin Congress.

In reality, the Government wished to emerge from its isolation, though it looked upon these various offers of expansion as a perilous game on the international chess-board. Tentative efforts were made to effect a *rapprochement* with the Central Empires; thereupon France, probably fearing to be anticipated by Italy, occupied Tunis (1881). This straw broke the camel's back; the exasperation against France among the majority of Italians drove the Cabinet, on 20 May, 1892, to conclude the pact known as the *Triple Alliance*, between Italy, Germany and Austria, with the aim of maintaining the *status quo* against foreign attacks. The Triple Alliance was amended in 1887, and again in 1892, but it never lost its character of being strictly defensive, and striving, in so far as possible, to stereotype the situation. This end could not be attained, because there were, in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, many elements of disturbance, and Europe tended towards a system of balance never really achieved. We are in the period of Franco-British wrangling that lasted for twenty years (1884-1904) up to the *Entente Cordiale*; the period in which, every now and then, the spectre of the alliance of the three Emperors of Germany, Austria, and Russia, appears and disappears, and finally, the period that saw the beginning of a real Franco-Russian Alliance. In this tangle the Triple Alliance was a delicate instrument in the hands of Bismarck, who wished to hold Austria bound to himself, without too much flouting of her interests,

either in the Balkans or in Italy. Holding Italy to the *status quo*, under the promise not to raise the Roman question,—a bogey that served its turn—and preventing her from drawing into too close contact with other States, he could dominate the uncertain situation by playing skilfully upon such an instrument as the Triple Alliance. To this game Italy had to lend herself; and when she sought to avoid its perils she was treated as disloyal and an underling. When, however, there was a question of benefits to be reaped she was kept at a distance as an outsider. This can be seen especially in the behaviour of the Central Empires on the questions of Libya, Morocco, the Near East and Massowah which came up between 1882 and 1885. The taking of Massowah, which the Italian Government carried out at the suggestion of England, agreeing to it in order not to increase the series of refusals, and after having already refused to take part in the Egyptian expedition, was a source of irritation both to Bismarck and to France. So that, after a certain amount of hesitation, Robilant agreed to form an *entente* with England with regard to the Mediterranean, February 1887, on the eve of the renewal of the Triple Alliance. The same principle of limited *ententes* was followed by Rudini in 1896, and again in 1908 with France, and, after various more or less practical attempts to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, Tittoni drew up in 1909 an *entente* with Russia. At the same time the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria and Italy was linked by Italy to *ententes* in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans with England, France and Russia. Italy thus became a pawn in the various vicissitudes of the European political game, useful now to this power, now to that, in a subtle contest of skill in which she seemed to derive benefits but which earned her only pricks and disappointments. This was due partly to the inherent difficulties of her position, and partly to the lack of continuity in her foreign policy, so that time and again there slipped from the hands of her ministers those

very cards which they had guarded with jealous care. In this way Italy received no help from her allies and gave none; and in the acute colonial situations in Eritrea and Libya, from allies and friendly governments she reaped only vexations. The Roman question, which had been the chief reason for the Triple Alliance, was never raised by a foreign government, not thanks to the Alliance, but for other reasons affected by the attitude of the Holy See itself and by the fact that it would never have provoked a war against Italy. Instead, the question of the unredeemed Austrian territory remained alive in the mind of the people and almost always paralysed any action of the Italian government in regard to Austria, giving the Treaty of the Triple Alliance meanwhile an aspect of insincerity that neutralized its efficacy. One of the elements of Italy's weakness arose from her economic condition which did not allow her to take up a military position beyond her strength, and therefore the fact of her having joined in alliances with militarist States meant that she had to serve their purpose.

In answer to this criticism of the Triple Alliance, which is by no means new, it is contended that Italy could not then remain in isolation, seeing that it was thought neither possible nor useful to make an alliance with France. Subsequent events only go to prove that certain difficulties can be overcome only at the cost of bitter experience. However prejudicial to the foreign policy of Italy it may have been, the Triple Alliance helped to maintain peace in Europe for thirty years; during that period Italy could continue her activities at home and re-establish her economy and finances, overcoming the severe crisis that had overtaken her. This she could not have done had Europe been disturbed by general wars in which Italy was bound to have been directly or indirectly involved.

As we have seen, the colonial expansion of Italy dates from this period and is grafted on to this foreign policy. The occupation of Massowah, carried out at the suggestion of England who did not wish to have France behind her

in the Soudan, was accepted as a consolation prize. It was the beginning of the Eritrean colony which brought Italy many losses and no gains. The formation of the colony of Somaliland in Africa, was a far easier enterprise.

When the French had gone into Tunis (1881), and the English into Egypt (1882), Italy tried to gain the recognition of her claim on Libya, and twenty years later, in 1902, her negotiations with her allies ended in success. In spite of this, the adventure seemed perilous and its realization difficult. But when, after the Agadir *coup* (1911) the French protectorate over Morocco was recognized by the Great Powers, the disturbance of the balance of power on the North African coast made the Italian government hasten to occupy Libya. This act resulted in the declaration of war on Turkey, the first of the series of wars in the Near East which scattered the sparks of the great European conflagration. The effort put forth by Italy to conquer Libya was considerable. By the peace treaty with Turkey she received as security the island of Rhodes and the Dodecanese.

It has been questioned whether Italy had need of colonial expansion. But, speaking on general lines, it would be a grave mistake to think that such a nation should have no colonial policy. Yet it must be acknowledged that the African colonies do not altogether satisfy her demographic and economic requirements and that the advantages gained thereby have been less than the disadvantages. From a political point of view, on the other hand, if it was a mistake in 1876 to let slip the occasion of declaring an Italian protectorate over Tunis, which is only a few hours distant from the Sicilian coast and had been colonized by Sicilians, if it was another mistake not to accept in 1882 the request of England for combined action in Egypt, it must be acknowledged that to maintain the balance of power on the Mediterranean it was necessary to decide on the occupation of Libya. It is possible to criticize the nature of the occupation, its extension, or the methods of coloniza-

tion in relation to the Arabs, but its political expediency is less disputable. In general, the whole of Italian colonial policy is open to discussion ; but what Great Power has been free from error in this respect ? Italy, the last comer, uncertain as to policy, without experience in the diplomatic game, with scant means, intrigued against by allied powers and friendly powers, in her colonies has liabilities rather than assets.

We have made a brief survey of the sum of problems which Italy had to face in the course of her unification and immediately after the constitution of the unitary kingdom, in order to realize the enormous effort she has had to make, and to gain a clear idea of the premises and causes of the phenomena which have appeared in her history up till to-day, phenomena which it is difficult fully to understand if they are not grasped in their complete reality.

This period was the trial by fire of the new political structure ; to have been able to face the problems presented by the history of the Risorgimento and to have put them on the way to a solution so as to achieve the stabilization of the State, is a clear sign that the new Italy has not arisen as an artificial construction, built from the outside, with no intimate nexus, but that she has been able to affirm herself vital and robust, in spite of grave defects of improvisation and the serious moral and material difficulties she has encountered.

These difficulties, however, and these defects, because they had a real foundation in the very structure of the new kingdom, could not be overcome without developing the negative elements of the situation, and these, not taken in time or neutralized by positive forces, could not but have serious consequences, if and when the general situation should be rendered uncertain by any unexpected cause.

To this it must be added that the very youth of the kingdom, the inadequate preparation of its men, its extemporized economy, accentuated difficulties which other peoples, maturer and more experienced, have also

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encountered but have been able to overcome with greater agility. So that, on the outbreak of the Great European War, Italy found herself in a situation which revealed both her great virtues and her great defects—another tremendous test for her, a test that is not yet ended but rather has taken on, after the war, an exceptional character.

CHAPTER II

THE WAR AND AFTER

§ 7. *Italy in the War*

AT the outbreak of the Great War, Italy was labouring under very difficult conditions. The public finances, upset by the Lybian war, had not yet been wholly restored, the army was ill-equipped, the public spirit restless. The General Elections of 1913 had increased the number of Socialist deputies ; and Giolitti, a prudent helmsman, while continuing to control the majority in the Chamber, had left office to Salandra so as to be able to take it up again at a favourable moment. Salandra, in the meantime, had faced the railway strike, the revolt of the provinces of Romagna (led by Mussolini and known as the Red Week) and the financial difficulties, believing that it was he and not the shadow of his patron who governed the country. The Foreign Minister was then the Marquis di San Giuliano, a man of no common merit, but a sceptic ; a skilful contriver, not a constructor ; a partisan of the Triple Alliance albeit lukewarm and distrustful towards it ; anti-French by tradition but not blind to the dangers of Francophobia. His health was, however, undermined by an illness which within a short time brought him to the grave and undoubtedly contributed to render him uncertain and vacillating in those terrible months.

On the outbreak of the war Italy made a declaration of neutrality. Neutrality, however, was differently understood by the various currents of public opinion. Some wished for a neutrality absolute, ruling out war, which would keep

Italy aloof from the two conflicting parties ; others, a neutrality that would allow of a possible understanding with the Central Powers ; others, again, a neutrality that should be the prelude to intervention on the side of the Entente. Yet another current revealed itself in the early days of the war, in favour of intervention on the side of the Central Powers with a view to possible advantages in the Mediterranean and the colonies.

The Government sought to disengage itself from the Triple Alliance on the grounds that the war was not a war of defence ; it ordered Italian neutrality in such a manner as not to oblige France to immobilize troops on the Italian frontier, and at the same time it sent out feelers towards both parties, making ambiguous moves that were swept, now right, now left, by the course of events.

It was natural, with this line of conduct, that the two enemy groups should send secret agents and political personalities into Italy to try to incline public opinion and responsible men to their respective sides. Meanwhile discussion seethed and the minds of the people remained in a state of agitation.

The nomination of Baron Sonnino as Foreign Minister (5 November, 1914) after the death of the Marquis di San Giuliano was a mistake ; he, by mentality, political preparation, character, and methods, was the man least fitted to direct foreign policy in a period so difficult and so big with consequences. Nor could it be said that Salandra himself, a student rather than a real politician, was equal to the situation.

These two wavered between neutrality and intervention. They gave no lead to public opinion nor did they sufficiently prepare the State from the military and financial point of view. They believed the war would be short—a mistake shared by many in other countries besides Italy—and they were sure that Italian intervention on either side would be rapidly decisive. In this state of mind, while fervour for intervention on the side of the Entente grew among

the intellectual and political classes in Italy, the Government considered at one and the same time the possibility of negotiations with Austria for the cession of the Trentino and part of Venetia Julia up to the Isonzo, and the opportuneness of joining forces with the Entente in order to obtain the Italian territories under Austrian rule, by force of arms.

This partial vision of the European war led the Salandra Cabinet to the attitude which was defined as *sacro egoismo* (hallowed selfishness), and took precise shape in the Treaty of London of 26 April, 1915. In the meantime, the attempt at negotiations with Austria having fallen through—since the latter did not believe Italy would intervene in the war and did not understand the importance of her intervention—Italy in May 1915 declared war on the side of the Entente, but only against Austria and for the national ends indicated in the Treaty of London and guaranteed in the event of victory by the Powers concerned.

Italy's share in the war was thus made to appear an attempt to insert a private war of her own in vaster and greater conflict. Politically and psychologically this was an error, and one that gave birth to not a few of the ills that have afflicted Italy, during the war and after, causing the enormous effort she put forth to be undervalued.

It is not possible to lay entirely to Italy's charge the mistake of putting her intervention on this basis, for a part of the responsibility lies with the Entente Powers themselves. It is true they justified the war in the face of the peoples of the world as a war for the defence of peace and the sanctity of treaties, for democracy and civilization, but from the beginning they had raised grave questions of interest which showed their hegemonic tendencies. The Italian Government ingenuously laid its cards on the table and made its share in the war appear directed above all to national ends. This attitude was forced on it by its initial error in adopting a neutrality that wavered between the two parties and by the fact of its having treated with Austria in the hope of a compromise on the Unredeemed

Territory. After that, it would have been neither sincere nor possible to pose as the paladin of democracy and civilization. These ideals, once the decision had been taken, served only to excite popular feeling. Nevertheless, the neutralism which poisoned the Italian effort remained alive for the very reasons that had induced the Government to break with Austria, and created irremediable division among Italians.

Another weak point in Italy's political position in the war was connected with the Adriatic question. The Treaty of London was based on the assumption that, after the war, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would still be in existence, even if shorn of territory and power. Hence the necessity that Italy should have an Adriatic almost wholly her own, and hence the precise delimitation in the Treaty of London of all the zone to be attributed to her, including the Dalmatian coast and excluding Fiume. Having assumed this position, it was natural that Italy should consider as her enemies even those peoples of the Austrian Empire that aspired to autonomy and liberty, such as the Czechs, Slovenes, and Croats, and that she should even show distrust of Serbia who was undoubtedly fighting for her own consolidation and aggrandizement. For this reason the Italian Government clung to the Treaty of London as to its sheet anchor. France, on the other hand, had no interest in the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—on the contrary, it was to her interest that it should remain to counterbalance the German Empire ; England considered the economic expediency of retaining a strong unit on the Danube, and while Tsarist Russia agreed to the Treaty of London, it was with the intention of upholding Slavism against both Austria and Italy and at the expense of Albania and the other Balkan States, her aim being to reach the Mediterranean through a Russian Constantinople and a Serbian Salonika. The secret pact between Russia and France during the war showed clearly all the ambiguity of the compromise.

Under these conditions the line taken by Italy was a snare for her feet, both during the war and after it. A group of high-minded Italians, headed by the Minister Bissolati and with the historian Professor Salvemini as their standard-bearer, tried during the war and especially after the disaster of Caporetto to correct the nationalist trend followed by the Government, and to form a current of public opinion in favour of the oppressed nationalities on the other side of the Adriatic. For a short time Orlando, then President of the Council, lent himself to this policy. As a result, the Pact of Rome (April, 1918) was drawn up between various political personalities of Italy and the Entente and exiles from Austria-Hungary, accepting the principle of nationality and self-determination for the peoples subject to the Hapsburgs and foreshadowing an amicable understanding with regard to the Adriatic. Thus, by implication, the revision of the Treaty of London was begun and the possibility created of a *rapprochement* between Italy and the peoples of the far shore of the Adriatic. But this far-seeing action remained a private contract; and, in practice, especially on account of Sonnino's rigid attitude, it failed to receive from the Government all the support it deserved. Also it seemed to many a mere war expedient.

The error in regard to the political platform of the war was completed by the economic and colonial clauses of the Treaty of London; these consisted in certain boundary rectifications of doubtful value. There was no wide outlook on the problems that would necessarily arise out of so vast a war. But was there any real necessity for a minute and detailed pact before Italy could declare war on the side of the Entente? Was it not sufficient that she should join in the fight on an equal footing with the other States, and so create an equal right to the fruits of victory? The Treaty of London sterilized the general motives of the war, alarmed neighbouring peoples, created insuperable friction, limited the advantages to which

Italy had a right to aspire by making them too concrete, and did not serve the purpose for which it had been made.

One point alone needed to be made clear between Italy and the Entente, and this received insufficient attention—the financial question. Italy had few resources, being a new nation without raw materials and already exhausted by the cost of the Libyan war. From the moment she prepared for war, she had thus to raise huge loans to meet the very great expense. But the three milliards of lire allowed for were not nearly sufficient. Internal loans could not produce any great result. She needed, and had to have, other foreign loans, and the weight of her liabilities became enormous. Italy bore, and will continue to bear, this crushing burden without any economic advantages, any special financial treatment, any resources for future trade, to compensate her for the difficult and generous effort she put forth. Nothing of this was provided for in the Treaty of London and the Powers concerned gave nothing, keeping strictly to the letter of the contract on the principle of *do ut des*.

§ 8. *The Course of the War*

As it was easy to foresee, the war developed on a very different plane from that of the restricted and particular issues envisaged by the Salandra Government and tenaciously pursued by Baron Sonnino with Nationalist support. There were developments in its moral and political basis ; nor could it be otherwise.

The intervention, first of England, and then of other States in aid of a Belgium invaded and a France assailed, however it may be estimated by future historians and whatever the part played by national self-interests, wore for the general public the character of a defence of right, of justice, of civilization. And this conception is explained by the manner in which the Germans began the war, proclaiming that necessity knew no law, that treaties

were scraps of paper, and giving as their motive a dubious thesis of resistance to aggression. Now that the war is over we can and do discuss on a foundation of documents and testimonies whether the action of Germany was caused by the sudden mobilization of Russia, whether the attitude of Austria in refusing arbitration was justified by the intrigues of the Serbs, whether in that complex of events as it appears up to now, the Central Powers had not always been resolved on a war for hegemony, whether the war spirit was not already a poison eating into the bones of all Europe, and whether there were not wrongs on both sides. But the unexpectedly sudden outbreak of the long-dreaded 'European conflagration', the attendant circumstances, the visible elements and determinant factors, gave to the German move the aspect of aggression, made the two Central Empires appear the expression of militarism and absolutism, and Belgium and France the symbol of pacific democracy and violated right.

What was happening in the world was in reality the epilogue of an accentuated militarism, of a hegemonic struggle of industrial and commercial capitalisms, and of a European balance of power uncertain and unstable. Without being fatalistic, everyone felt and foreboded a war within a short term, and diplomacy and governments were becoming almost wholly impotent to prevent it. But when it broke out, the Central Powers put themselves in the wrong with neutral opinion; and from that moment, and in the eyes of the whole world, the war became a fight for an ideal.

The wars of old were either dynastic, or wars of conquest, or religious, or national, or of a mixed character. Those had an ideal value which were national or religious, such as the Spanish wars against the Moors, the Crusades, or the old wars against Turkey; they could then muster whole peoples and move them to battle. But in modern times wars have been either national or wars of conquest. A war of many peoples and nations placed on an ideal

plane such as the one we have lived through had never been seen before. The Germans made a grave psychological mistake when they thought they could face a great war against many States without an ideal basis which would draw to them the sympathy and the hopes of the peoples outside its orbit. The widening of the struggle weakened their motives for fighting ; and their methods, such as the violation of neutrality, the submarines and the bombing of non-combatants, lessened the favour and sympathy of even friendly neutrals towards them and were judged more severely than the methods of the Entente such as, for instance, the food blockade. Thus the United States could be induced to come into the war, bringing to the Allies a considerable material and economic contribution, which in the end, by enabling and encouraging them to prolong their resistance, meant victory.

But the American reinforcements were, above all, given in furtherance of certain ideals—open diplomacy, the freedom of the seas, the suppression of economic barriers, the reduction of armaments, the restoration of Belgium, an independent Poland, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, the systematizing of the Italian frontiers, autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary, a League of Nations to guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of States great and small.

It is often repeated by Nationalists throughout the world that American idealism concealed self-seeking and was the sign of puritanical hypocrisy. These criticisms, which it is easy to make when the war is over, had no value during the war in regard to public opinion or the orientation of the spirit of the soldiers or the state of mind of neutrals. Even supposing that the democratic ideology was a cloak for national and plutocratic interests, used to excite the humane and civil feelings of the mass of soldiers on the different fronts, or to obtain from other peoples, neutral or wavering, their adhesion to the Entente, financial and moral support to continue the struggle, or a favourable

attitude, it was only in the name of such ideals that particular interests could be introduced into the general conflict. Whatever may have been the reality—and it undoubtedly was very different from appearances—this was the platform of war politics, and never, save in the Crusades and the defence of Christian civilization against the Turks, were loftier sentiments made the basis of the sanguinary strife of peoples and the armed conflict of nations. Even the Central Empires gave their assent to the ideal views of Wilson and tried to create an idealist propaganda among the neutral peoples ; but their aspect of aggressors, the origin of the conflict, the oppression in Belgium, took away credit and value from their effort to give an ideal content to their share of the war. And even had it been demonstrated that common errors and fatality of circumstances set the spark to the powder, it was impossible to remove the impression that, if Austria and Germany had not willed it, the war could have been avoided.

It is, however, just to recognize that the ideal aims were compromised by the determination of both sides to carry on the fight till the enemy was completely crushed. Because of this, the humane and political value of the invitation of Benedict XV, in August 1917, to peace negotiations, was denied, and the truth of that grave and acute phrase ‘useless carnage’ was not sufficiently understood. And this war spirit brought to naught many of the principles enunciated as war-aims, thus preparing the crisis of the Paris Conference. So that nationalism, driven out by the door came back through the window, with the fatal logic of war to the death and punitive justice against the enemy, digging thus an abyss that even now will not be filled till many years have passed.

Official Italy could but adhere to the ideal principles of the Entente and uphold them in propaganda among her population, but the logic of facts was stronger than the logic of words and her policy followed the lines traced for it at the time of her entry into the war. Italy's belated

declaration of war on Germany seemed as though it had been imposed on Sonnino's policy, and his reluctance to recognize the rights of the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy prevented Italy from carrying out a policy wider in outlook and at the same time more coherent. Such a policy would have ruled out from the beginning certain demands of territory that could only create a new irredentism and introduce elements of future strife.

The Treaty of London did harm even before the end of the war. By reason of it Italian public spirit remained agitated and divided ; the Socialists, neutralists by prejudice and without any outlook on foreign policy, became crystallized round their creeds, great and small, and were hostile to the war even when they did not hamper it by sabotage ; the Giolittian neutralists and the partisans of the Triple Alliance did little or nothing to set the Government on the right path, thus leaving the Nationalists to lord it over public opinion, opposed only by the slender barrier of the democratic and reformist group behind Bissolati.

But with the disaster of Caporetto came a great revival of the national spirit, and it can be said that then were achieved unity of purpose, and energy for resistance and victory, and a better relationship with the Entente. What was a source of wonder to many in every country, and will always remain a wonder to us Italians who lived through those troublous years, were the grit, skill and courage shown by the soldiers and officers at the front while on the ' home front ' politics were following so uncertain and contradictory a course. There was a kind of separation between the two sections, so that the men who fought could be said to be immune, living in a world of their own, a world of sentiments and ideals : duty, love of country, resistance, defence and victory—nothing more.

The episode of Caporetto, which was magnified out of all proportion but which corresponded to analogous episodes on every front, was in part, perhaps, the result of a breath of the icy wind of politics that had penetrated to the

trenches. Happily it ceased, and with the Piave line of battle was formed the moral Piave line. This only lasted a little while ; soon after Austria had agreed to the armistice, all the past political divisions and all the errors with regard to the purpose and conduct of the war revived in the spirit of the public, producing results which inevitably cast their shadow over the whole of the agitated post-war period. This happened in every country, but Italy had felt more severely than others the depressing effects of neutralism and of the lack of support for the war among the greater part of her working classes.

§ 9. *The Errors of the Peace Conference and the Italian Questions*

The Allied victory, in which the Italian victory over Austria played a glorious part, inspired the highest hopes for peace and for the economic and political reconstruction of Europe. The general situation was, however, perturbed by three great phenomena such as to check and deform the natural developments of the peace. These were first, the passage from the fictitious and artificial economy—which had of necessity been created during the war—to a real economy for each State ; secondly, the influence of the Russian and communist revolution, a negation of the Western *régimes*, which stirred the imagination of the working masses and peasants who had been through the war or had suffered severely from its hardships ; thirdly, the nationalist and egotistical spirit of the rulers of the Entente, excited by a victory almost unhopèd for and of which the magnitude had certainly never been foreseen ; and, in a special manner, the state of mind of France who sought to gather all the fruits of victory by the crushing of Germany, and that of England and her Dominions who wanted the sure and complete command of the seas and colonial advantages.

The America of Wilson found herself unprepared and unable to understand the European world, unequal to imposing a concrete plan that would give solid guarantees of peace and be a sure road towards a solution of the new and grave problems created by the war, or by the war made more acute or immediate. The man who had theorized during the immense conflict could not or did not succeed in applying his theories. He lost his chance and much of his authority when he did not oppose, as he should have done, the exclusion of the vanquished from the Peace Conference, as at the Congress of Vienna—a fact showing what spirit animated the Allies. The League of Nations, the result mainly of his efforts, failed to gain the adhesion of the United States of America, that is, of the country which he represented and of which he was the head of the State—and this not only because of internal dissension created by Wilson's personal policy but also because the American Congress could not but notice the irremediable conflict between the ideals of pacifism that inspired the conception of the League of Nations, and the nationalist realities, big with wars and strife of peoples, on which the peace treaties were built up.

This fatal clash of idealism and reality was at once the setting for Italy's action at the Peace Conference and the outcome of her policy in pursuit of her national interests.

At the time of the Armistice there had arisen a serious question, not covered, or rather, decided in the negative by the Treaty of London—the question of Fiume. On the collapse of Austria-Hungary and before the armistice of 4 November, 1918, this city, Italian by sentiment and tradition, had set up a provisional government and proclaimed its annexation to Italy. But the question of Fiume was framed in another and vaster, the Yugo-Slav, which, ill-defined during the war, became the pivot of Italian policy before and during the Paris Conference. On the one hand were the Nationalists with the thesis of the Treaty of London, *plus* Fiume ; on the other the Bissolatian

democrats with the thesis of the abandonment of Dalmatia *minus* Fiume, Zara and a few other centres. The Ministry was divided ; Sonnino stood by the Treaty of London and was ready to discuss Fiume, disposed perhaps to give it up, while Orlando accepted the thesis of the Treaty *plus* Fiume, with a few concessions on points of secondary importance. Thus the fatal Treaty of London turned up again to fetter Italian post-war policy, and thus the whole of Italy, without exception—for the few clear-sighted men were not really heard—was hypnotized by the Adriatic and Yugo-Slav question instead of concentrating on Fiume, and was so carried away as not to see the dangers of such a policy. Applause and votes of confidence which greeted Orlando in April, 1919, when he rashly left the Peace Conference because of his difference with Wilson, are evidence of this state of mind.

The general impression was that the Entente did not realize the strength of Italy, her rights and claims ; people spoke and wrote of the *vittoria mutilata*, and the most ardent national passions were aroused ; people said and wrote that Italy was ready to take up arms again. Italian sentimentality was bound to overflow ; there were in various quarters internal political interests making for exaggeration. The idea that the war could be said to have been lost, as far as national ends were concerned, spread among the masses, who already felt the pinch of economic conditions, unemployment, and the difficulties of a return to normal occupations, and all this produced in many social strata almost a subconscious rancour towards those who had dragged Italy into the war, a rancour fed by the Socialists who then waved aloft the banner of Russian Bolshevism.

How much the diplomatic mistakes of the Paris Conference contributed in Italy to inflame the spirit of reaction against the victorious war, history may tell. The memory of that period is still too living for dispassionate judgments, and it is too near for an appraisal of all its

elements. In view of the fervent imagination and the vivid sentiment of the Italian people, and in view of the difficulties of life immediately after the war, the feelings aroused by the events which led to Wilson's letter to the Italians, the abandoning of the Conference and then the return of Orlando and Sonnino without having received any promise, any satisfaction, were feelings of profound disappointment and bitter disenchantment.

Italy could and should have played an important part in the Paris Conference in regard to the various nationalities of the ex-Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, which concerned her as much as Germany concerned France. Not only this, but, by following a clear line and a decided programme, she could and should have been an active and positive element in the reconstruction of Europe. This was not to be. The Fiume question immobilized the Italian representatives and put them into opposition to Wilson and Yugo-Slavia; England and France took advantage of this to impose their plans and to look after their own advantages; and the ideal programme that Italy could freely have upheld together with Wilson was torn to tatters by the most serious contradictions.

The errors of the Italian diplomatists and Government did not lighten the wrong done to Italy by the Paris Conference; what they did was to render the situation irremediable. Among the injuries she received the principal was the uncertainty of her Eastern boundaries and the fact that the Fiume question was long left unsettled, that is, for two years and more until the Treaty of Rapallo, and then for about another two years until the Convention of Santa Margherita and, finally, for another two years and more until the Peace of Rome and the Treaty of Nettuno. If that which has come to pass to-day had been achieved at the signature of the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye (10 September, 1919), even with some details of secondary importance less favourable to Italy, Italy would never have suffered the injury of a sharp internal conflict nor seen the

action and diplomacy of her government stuck at a central point of politics that was not really central at all. As it was, other Italian interests were either abandoned, or inadequately looked after, or prejudiced ; and the action of the Italian Delegation robbed of efficacy in regard to the general interests of the peace.

Besides injuring Italy morally and economically, the unsettled Fiume question injured her also politically. The D'Annunzio *coup de main* on Fiume was the beginning of the crumbling of the internal discipline of the State and gave an outlet to the phenomenon of *arditismo* and *squadristismo*, or the use of armed irregular bands. It must be recognized that diplomatic tergiversations were cut short by the sentimental action of the Poet and that indirectly he contributed to hasten some such solution as that of Rapallo. But the moral and political harm that resulted for Italy was nothing but a direct consequence of the delay of the Conference in finding a suitable solution. There is no malice in thinking that the game into which Orlando and Sonnino ingenuously let themselves be trapped was the following : to hold Italy fettered by the question of Fiume, so that in the Peace she should not have freedom of action, so as to have her support, if need were, against Wilson, and on the side of M. Clemenceau and Mr. Lloyd George, who were in reality the masters of the situation and those chiefly responsible for the Peace Treaties.

§ 10. *The Economic Problems of the Peace*

In a much greater measure than any other Allied State Italy suffered yet another immediate and serious injury from the economic orientation of the Peace Conference and its fundamental error in regard to the so-called European reconstruction. The criticisms addressed on this score to the politicians and technical experts of Paris are by now common property. In substance, the whole economic policy of the peace was based on a colossal error—

that of wishing to make all the war losses payable by Germany, who was established as the centre of a certain solidarity of the vanquished countries, and, at the same time, wishing Germany to be utterly crushed, that is to say, deprived of the means of paying not only all that the victors wished but even that which in reality she could and therefore should have paid. The impossibility of the economic reconstruction of Europe was a corollary to this proposition for the very reason that the elements of a new equilibrium would be lacking.

Never in human history has a deliberating body of such high importance and such tremendous responsibility shown so much blindness in the appreciation of economic phenomena and the inflexible laws which govern them. There was a sharp and subtle play between certain politicians, on the one hand those who thought they could work upon the economy of a country such as Germany so as to split her unity, and, on the other, those who believed that Germany was still so rich as to be able to repay with interest all the expenses of the war incurred by the victors, or, more exactly, that the German people should be reduced to a state of slavery and made to give their work for at least half a century to the victorious peoples.

And while the Peace Conference laid the foundations of such an irrational and disastrous European economy, it did not give a thought to the regulation of inter-Allied debts. It seemed as though there were a tacit and hypocritical feeling on the part of all. France, Italy and Belgium, with the *arrière-pensée* of not paying, did not raise the question for fear lest, by speaking of it, they strengthened the claims of their creditors ; and neither did England and the United States mention it, fearing to prejudice their credit, or to see it reduced, or, worse still, made a subject for discussion in relation to other concrete interests or other aspirations. The debts between England and the United States would be regulated separately, outside the Conference. However this may have been, the fact was that this problem

was not dealt with, and remained to shackle the weaker debtors, much to their detriment. What was lacking at Paris was a synthetic vision embracing all elements and appraising simultaneously the potentiality of the vanquished countries, the settlement of inter-Allied debts, and the general conditions likely to bring about, with the fewest possible upheavals, a renewal of the economic life of peoples in sharp transition from a fictitious and diseased to a normal economy. Thus nothing was done to restore the equilibrium and the economy of Europe on a solid basis from which the victorious countries would have been able to derive real advantages, not problematical war indemnities.

At the Paris Conference the solution of the economic problem should have prevailed over every other question ; for, after five years of a vast and monstrous war of peoples, in which the destruction and displacement of general material interests was equal to the greatest conceivable cataclysm, the lack of economic equilibrium was bound to reopen in a severer form all the questions which might otherwise have been solved.

In point of fact the figures imposed on Germany do not bear examination, and apart from any resistance to payment her economic collapse was inevitable. No one can tell by what strange psychology the world still believed Germany to be economically strong and bought marks. Private speculators thus in a certain measure helped to make up for the excesses of Paris. The mutilation of Upper Silesia aggravated the situation, taking away another source of production from a Germany already tottering under the enormous weight of reparations. The occupation of the Ruhr followed, an error due to the same mentality and to the conflict between the two tendencies of the Entente—the political, favouring the dismemberment of Germany, and the economic, favouring her subjection. It was of no avail that Bonar Law, understanding the gravity of the step, made the gesture of offering to cancel off a large part of Allied debts to England. Who at that

time believed that there was any need to take such debts seriously? Even if politically justifiable, Germany's passive resistance to the occupation of the Ruhr meant economically the collapse of a whole system. The Dawes plan was the first remedy. Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugo-Slavia likewise needed their plans of financial systematization—payment of indemnities, loans, controls, a long chain of contributions, so that that other pillar of Europe should not fall with enormous injury to all. The Entente and America tardily hastened to give support and aid.

The political consequences of economic collapse are always serious. But, in the financial upheaval and general want of equilibrium following on a war they are more serious still, and especially in a Europe flanked by a revolutionary and dissentient focus such as Russia.

The Russian Revolution was inadequately appreciated in its psychological and economic reaction on the vanquished peoples, and it was by no merit of the Allies and the men of the Peace Conference that Germany did not fall into a Bolshevik crisis. The structure of the German State stood the strain, thanks largely to the merits of the Centre and Democratic parties; but, among the masses, the psychological repercussion was the stronger and more lasting inasmuch as an oppressive and irrational economic policy imposed on them the greatest sacrifices.

The Powers of the Entente seemed to believe in the result of internal wars in Russia and facilitated them, sending assistance to Kolchak, Denikin, Judenitch and Wrangel. They believed likewise in the possibility of the so-called *cordon sanitaire*.

All this helped to make the Russian situation more acute and delayed the possibility of contact with the West. The Genoa Conference seemed a means of beginning the neutralization of the injurious effects of a dissentient and hostile Russia outside our economic circle, but the attitude of the creditor-Powers on the debts question prevented

the efforts of Mr. Lloyd George from bearing fruit. Wirth and Rathenau, on behalf of the Germans, found means of renewing economic contact with Russia and establishing relations between the two States on a basis of complete parity and the cancelling of debts and credits.

The policy of contact with Russia was and is the only policy possible. The economic solidarity of Europe is an indestructible fact and an insuperable law. This solidarity, broken by the war, was actually denied by the makers of the peace—denied by the selfishness of the richer towards the less rich, of the creditors towards the debtors, even among the Allied States ; denied by the enormous protective barriers placed between State and State, even by the new and more or less artificial States and Statelets that have bloomed after the war ; denied by the fluctuations of the exchanges after the war, with no measure to correct the resulting crises ; denied again, in the treatment of the vanquished States, in the insane belief that these could undergo territorial and colonial mutilations, and worse, the loss of their industrial and mining centres, and the most serious political upheavals, and yet pay all the costs and losses of such a stupendous and destructive war ; and, finally, denied in regard to Russia, whom it was believed possible to isolate politically and economically, while all that was done was to strengthen her and drive her towards Asia.

It is easy to see how mistaken was the basis and spirit of the Peace Conference, and how in its very constitution there was lacking that discussion between equals in which all States, victors and vanquished, could have taken part in substantial collaboration towards the peace.

In subsequent years all the economic web has had to be unravelled and rewoven from the beginning. A labour of Sisyphus, or Penelope's web, who can tell how long it will last, or what its issue, what new and yet graver problems it will bring forth ? Cannes, London, Paris, Lausanne,

Geneva, Locarno, are stages in a tragic retreat from positions of which the names mark the defeats of the Entente—Versailles, Saint Germain-en-Laye, Neuilly, Trianon, Sèvres.

§ 11. *The Italian Crisis, 1919-20*

In this setting post-war Italy appears in her reality. In view of her moral and economic condition she may be said to have given the Entente relatively more than any other country, and in consequence she was bound to suffer more than any other.

The first effect of putting an end to the single Allied front in finance was bound to be the depreciation of the lira in relation to allied currencies, a depreciation which proceeded by sudden drops, with pauses and recoveries, greatly detrimental to the rebirth of national economy and bringing disturbance among the working and middle classes, especially the wage earners and salaried employees. This aggravated the state of mind of the people, already profoundly disturbed by the diplomatic set-backs and inclined to the blackest pessimism.

On the other hand, by a strange confidence in the miracle-working powers of victory, industrialists and bankers rushed headlong into irrational undertakings, making attempts at trade with ruined countries, urging the Government to increase the paper money in circulation ; all of which produced a fictitious prosperity and a sense of restoration and wealth the more fallacious in that it had no foundation in the actual conditions prevailing immediately after the war. This tendency, unchecked by public opinion and unregulated by the Government, helped to bring national economy and even public finance into a still more serious condition. For many of these enterprises, promoted by men who had speculated in war material, burdened the State with parasitic enterprises

entailing appeals for protective laws, State aid and State intervention.

The bureaucracy which, during the war, had grown accustomed to deal with private business and to graft the action of the public administration on to that of private enterprises, urged on by interested parties and by instincts of self-preservation, continued on the same road and was willing to go on with what was then called 'associated economy'. The working classes, and especially the Socialists, favoured this tendency and in agreement with bureaucrats, bankers and industrialists formed an ever increasing series of consortiums, limited liability companies, huge co-operative societies and fictitious companies without capital. In all this they thought they described the State Socialism which they desired as a prelude of what they emphatically called the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

This unthinking and irrational movement had its effect even on agriculture, the most measured and stable element in Italian economics. With the depreciation of the lira, food products increased rapidly in price, and this, with the oscillations of the purchasing power of money, brought large gains both to producers and sellers. Hence two phenomena developed contemporaneously—capitalist speculation in land by those who, on a larger or smaller scale, exploit every economic crisis, and the demand of the peasants for a piece of land of their own. This demand on the part of the peasants was rendered imperative by the simultaneous operation of three causes : first, the rapid rise in the price of agricultural products, so that ownership of the land meant large and immediate gains ; secondly the state of mind of the peasants back from the war, who during four years in the trenches had been told again and again by their officers and Government propagandists that they should have land as recompense for their sacrifices, till the watchword became *The land for the peasants!* Thirdly, an agitation about the waste or poorly

cultivated lands of Central and Southern Italy, where traces still existed of common rights over land long in the possession of big landlords. This agitation had become acute during and after the war in the effort to induce the land-owner to intensify the cultivation of corn so as to diminish importation from abroad which, as a State monopoly, cost enormous sums. The state of mind among the great peasant classes, worked upon by these complex influences can be imagined. It was aggravated at the same time by the activities of the parties with a mass following and of the associations of ex-combatants. The problem of the rural classes is very grave, and in Italy its historical and moral origins go deep. This agitation was only a transient phenomenon springing from a permanent cause.

The Government, in order to regulate such agitation and render its effects less illegal, issued a Decree (2 September, 1919) legalizing, as it were, the occupation of waste or ill-cultivated lands; the result was violent seizures of land even in places where nothing of the kind had been seen before. Moreover, in creating the Ex-Service men's Institute (*Opera dei combattenti*), the Government gave it the right to demand the compulsory expropriation of badly cultivated lands in favour of ex-service men who were peasants living on the spot.

These events caused it wrongly to be believed abroad that Italy was on the verge of a Sovietistic revolution. In reality, Italy was passing through a phase of economic and political crisis that could not fail to produce agitation among the masses and strikes of labourers and employees. It is easy to understand how the strike weapon was abused by the political and trade union organizers, as happened everywhere, even in countries more firmly established and less shaken than Italy, such as France and England. In Italy, as we have seen, there was in addition a sentimental crisis that disorganized the whole public state of mind and rendered the general condition of the country much

less stable. The economic hardships of the post-war period seemed more severe than those of the war, in so far as there was less power to stand up against them. In short, the tragedy of Italy was to be and to feel herself a victor and to undergo the humiliations and crises of the vanquished. It is easy to understand how the people were allured by voices from Russia, and could cry *Viva Lenin!* and applaud Bombaci who, with long beard, and arms uplifted like Moses, came to the agitated crowd to tell them that the sun had risen in the East and that the East was Moscow! The labouring classes had been neutralist during the war. Now, through economic sufferings and political crisis, they turned against those who had willed the war and, at the same time, against the middle classes, lending a willing ear to the socialists who extolled the dictatorship of the proletariat. The adhesion of the Italian proletariat to the international strike against the Treaty of Versailles belonged to the same period as the fall of Orlando from the Premiership as a result of the situation in which Italy had been placed by the Peace Conference. Those were the days, too, of the popular risings against the cost of living, the looting of the shops, the fixing of prices with a fifty per cent decrease by Citizen Committees, precisely at the same time as the great crises among the vanquished people, in Berlin, at Munich, and in Budapest. In this heated international atmosphere the economic condition of Italy went from bad to worse, and the exchange became still more unfavourable. Unemployment increased. Emigration, the safety valve of the surplus population, could not be resumed owing to the situation of the world labour market. In January, 1920, when the Prime Minister, Nitti, was in London, there broke out first the general strike of the postal and telegraphic services, then that of the railways. These strikes had, it is true, an economic character, but their organizers intended them also as political manœuvres to extend the revolutionary movement—a manœuvre which failed, thanks to

the opposition and resistance of the Christian Trade Unions and the Popular Party.

The proletarian movement culminated in the occupation of the factories in the summer of 1920. This was the most difficult period of the Italian post-war crisis. Giolitti, who had replaced Nitti at the head of Government, had faced the financial problem by taking strong measures against war profiteers, by enforcing the registration of shares, and by increasing the death duties. These measures had checked the industrialists and bankers in their headless course ; they were, however, too plainly improvised and too irrational, so that, if they put a stop to plutocratic excesses, they checked also the incipient adjustment of national economy. The effects were most noticeable on the wages and labour-shifts of the workers, who are always hit by the re-bound of offended capitalism. Communist ferment and spontaneous outbursts of feeling did the rest, and the workers in the industrial centres raised the red flag over the factories—an episode that cannot be properly considered apart from the general atmosphere and situation in which it occurred.

Soon the workers themselves noticed that their excesses were vain and their dreams unreal ; lack of capital and of confidence brought the workshops to a standstill and stopped production and wages. Surrender was necessary and urgent ; the workers' leaders and the Government negotiated about the form after the substance had vanished.

After this event, which marked the bankruptcy of socialist ideology, the period of the great post-war upheavals and deep-rooted disturbances began to decline. The elements of renovation among the healthy forces of the country revealed themselves steadily—for that matter they had never been lacking, even in the darkest hours.

In the diplomatic field the Treaty of Rapallo was the beginning of a solution of the question of Trieste, and in December, 1920, the strong attitude of the Rome Government towards D'Annunzio, who surrendered to

Italian regular forces, marked the end of that adventure. Even the end of hostilities with Albania (apart from the deplorable manner in which the Italian government abandoned Vallona) had a calming effect, for the ensuing polemics had no serious influence on internal politics.

In the financial field the reduction of expenditure, the increase of revenue, and the liquidation of war administrations had already begun, and the lira was finding its natural exchange rate at 0.25 gold, as a mean point of oscillation in relation to the gold standard. The time had come for the abolition of State control of grain and of the sale of flour and bread at a political price below the real cost, a proceeding which involved an average loss of about half a milliard lire a month. Nitti attempted to do so by a Decree, but fell in June, 1920, through the combined hostility of Socialists, Nationalists and Liberals of the Right. His successor, Giolitti, delayed a resumption of this measure until the beginning of the next year, when in spite of parliamentary obstruction from Socialists and Communists (already separate parties), the bill was passed, greatly contributing to the balancing of the Budget.

At that moment the gravest difficulties came from the Civil Service which agitated for an increase of salaries and the reform of the law regulating its legal and economic status. The agitation was reasonable and had a just foundation in the disproportion between the original salaries estimated on a gold basis and the actual salaries on the basis of a paper currency depreciated by more than seventy-five per cent. The methods of agitation, however, exceeded the limits of the relationship between public servants and the State, and the Press unduly magnified the facts. That this was so was seen when Bonomi, Giolitti's successor, proposed and Parliament approved various provisional measures for an increase of salaries, and upheld the disciplinary measures that had been taken against the promoters of the strike. This meant the end of the excessive forms of agitations.

The psychological crisis in Italy, in 1919-20, which arose out of difficult moral, economic and financial conditions after the war and was aggravated by the series of diplomatic set-backs in Paris on the question of Fiume, culminated towards the middle of 1920. The fact that this difficult period did not involve the collapse of the State and the political constitution is but another proof of the soundness of the Italian national structure and of the vitality of Italy's moral resources, in spite of the fact that she bears within herself the evils incidental to the manner of her unification and constitution as a State.

Comparing the crisis of Italy after her constitution as a unitary State (1870-80) and the crisis she went through in the first two years after the war (1918-20), one notices, above all, that the first was far more serious and longer than the second, and was a great deal more perilous inasmuch as then the unitary State was of recent formation and, save for British sympathy, had no serious diplomatic support. And if the European atmosphere after the war was more apt to precipitate demagogic elements and factors, because of the reaction against the war and of the enormous economic difficulties, Italy had still a reserve of inner energies wherewith to meet them. Moreover, her moral position as a victorious nation, though shaken by the attitude of the Allies, still remained in the consciousness of many Italians and especially of the ex-service men.

It is clear to the observer of political phenomena that, between these two crises of the kingdom of Italy there is a fundamental co-relation which some writers have called the *crisis of the political or governing class*. Of this crisis we shall speak in the next chapter ; here we have only to note that, on the unification of Italy, though the class of moderate Liberals, the political class of the time, found itself weakened by the struggle and wars of the Risorgimento and at the same time unprepared to face the problems of the new State, it could still assert itself and stand firm. Whereas, after the Great War, the Democratic Liberal political

class was already exhausted, less by the effort called forth by the struggle than by the equivocal position it had taken up during the war and by the conflicts at the Peace Conference, so that it was wholly unprepared to face either the new problems left by the war or the rise of the new parties that were stirring in public life.

CHAPTER III

THE CRISIS IN 'THE POLITICAL CLASS'

§ 12. *The Causes of the Crisis in the Italian Political Class*

A PHENOMENON by no means new in the life of civilized peoples—a phenomenon with deep causes and a considerable significance—is that which is generally spoken of to-day as a 'crisis in the political class'. The expression refers to the theory that there is a 'political' or 'ruling class'; that there is always a minority which having made itself homogeneous and compact, guides the peoples, governs the nations, represents the community, synthesizes and summarizes the interests and ends of society, and orders political forces as the resultant of all human activities. This minority publicists call 'the political class'. Whether the form of government be absolute or representative, tyrannical or demagogic, there is always according to this theory, a dominant political class. If it becomes fossilized as a ruling caste, society becomes fossilized likewise; if, on the contrary, it has a flexible structure and power of assimilation, the elaboration of society goes forward more swiftly. If public authority is confined to a few hands, or embodied in a single tyrant, a new political class arises which, on attaining maturity, overthrows that which had entrenched itself in the exercise of an odious dominion. If, on the other hand, political institutions are provided with automatic safety-valves, a change of government relieves pressure upon the whole of society. The political classes in each State rise to power or disappear, reconstitute

themselves or fall according to the general conditions in which they exist and operate—conditions of which they are at once a cause and a result.

This theory is an interesting interpretation of the development of human society. Whatever may be the historical evidence in its favour, it certainly is well-adapted to the modern period in which transition from absolute to representative systems has widened participation in public life, and given room for the play of parties and the prevalence of currents, interests and forces that are improperly styled 'classes'.

The word 'class' is here used in a generic, not a specific sense, and does not refer exclusively to economic structure. Yet, even in the generic sense, the word has an economic bearing, for in reality it is the economic structure of society that reveals the political forces and tendencies, causing them to flourish and helping to determine their phases and developments. Thus a feudal economic structure culminates in a landed aristocracy, in oppressive customs barriers and restrictions, in a rigid and stationary economy marked by the predominance of agrarian interests. Therefore it tends at the same time towards absolute power and absolute privileges ; whereas an economic structure broadly industrial, results in political forms more or less democratic. In the first case the political class is represented by the landed aristocracy ; in the second it is formed by that portion of the middle classes that best interprets the intensity and enterprise of modern economy, whether capitalist or labour.

When among the elements constituting the connecting tissue between economic structure, political *régime* and governing class, the equilibrium fails or has been disturbed for any length of time the resulting social disturbance is known as a Crisis in the Political Class.

The Italian political class during and after the war, passed through precisely this crisis. The political class, which for nearly half a century (from 1876 onwards)

had held the reins of power and directed public life, had never been renewed ; it had become incapable of absorbing the new currents which had been forming on the margin of political life, in the thought, aspirations, interests and general feelings of the people. Its representative men had not sufficient faith in themselves to bring about an inward travail of renewal, or to put forth the necessary strength to carry them over the crisis. The elements of this crisis had been accumulating through the long years during which the governing class had held office, but there were other factors inherent in the very structure of the Italian State ; the first were specifically moral and parliamentary, the second economic and political.

In the course of this survey we have been able to note the elements of weakness in the new State as the course of events gradually brought them to light ; just as we have also been able to recognize the virtues inherent in the Italian people, as they overcame time and again the enormous difficulties which arose both in the course of their establishment in unity and liberty, and in the successive development of the national State.

While calling itself Liberal, the party which from the earliest days of Italian unity formed the expression of the dominant political class, was Conservative in substance, mentality and structure. It called itself Liberal inasmuch as it upheld representative government and the attendant political liberties ; and again, it showed itself negatively Liberal in its struggles against despotic governments, caste privileges, and the effects of feudal *régimes* and ecclesiastical control that had survived from Eighteenth Century society. Yet, while the new order was taking the place of the old, the tendency of this party was to make of political life the monopoly of a few and to concentrate it in the powers of the State. The restricted suffrage, on the basis of property qualification, the limitation of the autonomy of local governments of Communes and Provinces, the hostility towards the formation of regional units, the

distrust, nay, the fear, of every working-class movement, the excessive protection of property manifest in fiscal measures of which the greater part pressed hardest on the consumer, and the bureaucratic centralization were all results of the prevailing conservatism in the formation and beginning of the new State. The injurious effects of this policy were at first neutralized by the vigour of the ideal of independence and unity, in which the people had a sentimental share, so that the political and popular classes were, in a manner, welded together. Moreover general economic conditions, then prevailing agricultural and commercial, corresponded to the economic interests of the Right, which stood for the abolition of barriers and internal customs, the abolition of mortmain and of the economic fetters of the old *régimes*.

But, in the long run, the disproportion between the economic and political development of the new Italy and the conservatism of the Right became apparent, so that, in 1876, the latter was constrained to hand over power to the Left which, composed of elements in closer contact with the professional and working-classes, brought with it a tradition of about twenty years' parliamentary practice in Opposition.

In Italy it was believed that this was the beginning of an English alternation of parties in power, with that flux and reflux of political currents in the administration of the State which is as necessary to the dynamics of political life as to those of physical life. Unfortunately, things fell out otherwise. The new men were less prepared than their predecessors had been, they had less practical experience and less training of character ; moreover, they had neither the homogeneity of a compact political class nor a distinct outlook, based on conviction, to differentiate them from the out-going party. What in 1876 seemed a parliamentary revolution was, in substance, only a change of men, and the new men with all their demagogic phraseology and sparkling rhetoric were, at bottom, conservatives like the

old. The principal agents in the fall of the Right were the Southern members of parliament, who expressed local discontent rather than a current of ideas. Moreover, any attempt to follow out a clearly-defined programme was impeded by the ‘transformist’ methods brought into fashion by Agostino Depretis who dominated the situation.

The Italian word *trasformismo* denoted a parliamentary method unknown in England. Its object was to attenuate and obliterate differences between ideas and parties, to promote understandings mainly personal, among the coteries which formed themselves, temporarily or permanently, round Cabinets or in the Parliamentary lobbies. The old distinction between Right and Left, between Conservatives and Progressives, no longer had any clear meaning nor any political or electoral *raison d’être*. Majorities and Oppositions gathered round men and groups at determined moments for determined objects, only to vary and change again when opportunity or vanity or interest provided a motive or pretext.

Thus ideas and programmes, interests and personal power merged continually one into the other ; democrats acted as reactionaries, pacifists were imperialists, moderates became anti-clericals. Moreover, just at that time there was a considerable recrudescence of anti-clericalism of the French sort, serving to set the people at variance over an imaginary and sentimental peril.

Meanwhile, on the margin of Italian parliamentary life three new forces that were later on to develop considerably, had come into being : The *Workers’ Party* which afterwards became the Socialist Party ; organized industry, which soon asserted itself with considerable vigour ; and the Catholic Social current which, with the strength derived from numerous institutions designed for the benefit of workers and peasants, after the Encyclical of Leo XIII *De conditione opificum* (15 May, 1891), took the name of Christian Democracy.

Normally, these three new forces which were drawing to themselves young and ardent elements in the country, should have met the dominant political class in the political field ; but on each side, reasons and prejudices tended to prevent this. Liberalism, democratic only in name, had, as we have said, taken up a position substantially conservative. It was opposed to universal suffrage and feared the participation of the popular classes in public life. Thus it tended to monopolize the government. On the other hand the Socialists were opposed to Parliament in the name of the proletarian revolution and direct action ; the industrialists declared themselves non-political and outside parties ; and the Social Catholics or Christian Democrats were still shackled by the *non expedit* and therefore kept aloof from the political struggle.

Nevertheless, parliamentary politics formed the centre of attraction for these new forces : they met the old political class on the ground of State intervention, which was as agreeable to those who stood out for state monopoly and state centralism—meaning their own monopoly—as it was to the new comers. The latter had each a reason for believing in the State ; through the State, the Socialists were beginning to acquire a monopoly in the labour and co-operative field ; the industrialists were tasting the sweet fruits of protectionism, and the Catholic Socials with the Clericals were attenuating anticlerical pressure by electoral pacts. These contacts gave the ruling party room to display its ingenuity and its power of domination, assimilating or reacting, making pacts, or beating a retreat, dividing or reuniting, making concessions and granting favours or promoting inquiries and opening hostilities. The man who represented this phase—vaguely called that of Liberal Democracy—was Giolitti ; a man of much parliamentary ability and considerable administrative perspicacity, but as devoid of scruple as of idealism. He played the game as long as Fortune helped him, and tried to disintegrate Socialists, Industrialists and Catholics,

supporting, opposing, compromising and exploiting them. Years and the exercise of power made him seem greater than he was ; he never faced a fight with open vizor, he recoiled from battles, falling back on his defences, and won them by avoiding them. During the last ten years he lost by this system nearly every political chance that he might have turned to advantage had he taken responsibility for the fight. By his long tenure of power and his ascendancy over the political class, the harm he did to the public life of Italy was considerable. In substance, he acted as a Conservative even when he played the Liberal ; he showed himself rigid when he yielded and posed as a moralist when he broke the laws. It must, however, be recognized in his favour that he tried to bring the masses into public life, that he avoided reaction, that he granted universal suffrage at an opportune moment, and that he refrained from any aggravation of anti-clerical hostility to the Vatican. But he knew how to make these general benefits converge towards greater power for his own electoral clique rather than towards the making of a truly democratic state. He thus helped to hasten the crisis of the political class, which he reduced to a strong nucleus centring round himself and upholding at all costs his disguised dictatorship ; while he, in return, was strong in friendship and in enmity. He favoured accordingly those deputies who concerned themselves less with general politics than with the affairs of their own constituencies or provinces, which they reduced to the condition of electoral fiefs. His surest friends among them became real proconsuls (whom we may look on as the forerunners of the Fascist *ras*), holding the bureaucracy and local administration of their districts in moral dependence. For this group of trusty companions the Chamber of Deputies often became a clearing-house of affairs. It was Giolitti who, by avoiding open parliamentary trials of strength, developed a system of perpetual compromise by which he overcame the stoutest resistance, corroding the parties with facile

alliances, wearing them down by bribes and local contests. The prefects were often agents of his policy, in the French fashion, and the administration of the Communes and Provinces became a means of consolidating the parliamentary coteries.

For thirty years Giolitti was the greatest exponent of this system, but he was not the only one, nor did it all derive from him and his mentality ; it was the fruit also of general conditions and of the crystallization of the political class.

To this state of things the Senate nominated by the King, contributed largely. In a Two-Chamber system the Senate should be an element of conservation, of control, of balance, provided always that it have full autonomy. Royal nomination of Senators became, inevitably, nomination by the Executive, and was constantly used by various Governments as a means of dominating the Upper Chamber. The history of the Italian Senate is not very stirring. It has never been without noble figures and men of austere virtue, nor has it ever failed to raise an admonishing voice at difficult moments. Yet it has failed to exert a serious influence on Italian life because it has never been in contact with the people, to which it is alien by origin, and it has always given its support to the Government, by which, in reality, its members have been chosen. The majority of Senators have always been drawn from the upper grades of the Civil Service, from ex-deputies who had lost their seats in the elections or withdrawn from the fight, and from landed proprietors. By temperament, mentality, opportunity and interest they have always been tied to the governing power, whoever its exponent might be at a given moment ; always judging the future blacker and more perilous than the present, and the present worse than the past—a state of mind not unnatural in men of advanced age appointed for life.

Thanks to this complex of causes and phenomena, Italian Liberalism remained a vague idea with a negative

content. It belied its name in respect of political liberty, creating, time and again, disguised dictatorships such as those of Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti. It failed to observe the economic postulates of Liberalism, falling into a protectionism ever more vexatious, and into a centralism and system of State interference increasingly oppressive. By a logical yet strange inversion, the governing political class, while believing that it had concentrated everything in its own hands, was in reality steadily losing control of the political life of the country, and abandoning to irresponsible bodies a part of the effective power of the State. Witness the Socialist monopoly in the labour field, and the growing strength of bureaucracy which came to prevail over local governments and even over Parliament itself.

In public opinion the moral strength of the political class was waning, and the opposition parties sang the dirge of Italian Liberalism as of something dead and gone. In truth, it was the old oligarchy that was passing, not Liberalism ; but the name had so entered into the minds of the many, that associations and public men preferred to call themselves Democrat rather than Liberal, or else combined the two terms, so that, strange to say, after the war Conservatives like Salandra and Sonnino took the name of Liberal-Democrats to differentiate themselves from the Giolittians who were by then known as Democratic-Liberals—a verbal juggle! Neither party could seriously lay claim to these names with which they tricked themselves out, and which indicated the confusion of ideas that is the sign of latent crisis in a political class. Hence, in common parlance, these groups were not called by their artificial names running up and down the scale of Liberalism and Democracy but by the names of the principal actors who used them as symbols to mask their oligarchy. In the Chamber of Deputies and in the Press there was more often talk of *Giolittiani* and *Salandrini*, of *Sonniniani* (as there had been in other days of *Rudiniani* or *Crispini*) than of parties based on ideas and programmes.

§ 13. *Parliamentarism*

Phenomena such as those we have described have appeared also in France, but there an urgent and living public consciousness was created by the deep-seated conflict between republican democracy and anti-democratic monarchism, by reason of which experiments in imperialism and monarchism alternated for a century with Republican ventures. The history of Liberal and Democratic France, as a *régime* with a progressive development and as an experiment of parties in process of establishment, begins precisely with the Third Republic. It might be said that the democratic parliament of France is younger than the Italian and that past changes of *régime* must make the Republic itself less stable. But, in France, the political class of to-day derives its origins and traditions from the Great Revolution; the Liberal leaven has had a wider field of penetration, the middle classes have a firm and homogeneous structure not recently built up, and the unification and political formation of France are centred in a single metropolis, Paris, the sum and synthesis of the country. Moreover the tradition of France as a nation, that is to say, her centralized administration and social conscience, her fortunes in war and colonial expansion, her history and literature, her accumulation of wealth and her position as the crucible of the interests of the whole world, have created in the French people a political consciousness which has become at once habit and act. The industrial and professional middle classes which have governed and govern France are rather Democratic than Liberal, and they too have gone through disguised dictatorships, corrupting demagogies and political scandals. The disease of parliamentarism has shown its disturbing symptoms even in France, in rhetorical and demagogic oratory, in the traffic of favours, the lack of a firm party organization, the backstairs combinations and the light-minded changes of programmes and policies, all of which

have reacted on the executive power, producing instability, weakness towards parliament, and excesses in relation to local life and the rights of individual citizens.

In spite of all this, and though France has not been able to avoid the crisis of parliamentarism and is struggling even to-day in toils from which she does not know how to free herself, she has not undergone a crisis in her political class. Amid the conflict of *régimes*, she has generated considerable powers of resistance, and her great tradition as a State and a nation has given her men, parties and classes capable of facing the most perilous situations, and of carrying through the political struggle. Despite the fact that the Third Republic has had seventy-five Cabinet crises, it has succeeded in creating a first-class Colonial Empire, and in bringing France back to the foremost place in continental Europe.

Italy, on the other hand, has had a brief national tradition, a greater sense of detail, several centres of political influence and no metropolitan city. With labour and pain and at heavy cost, she has had to build up the framework of a great State, without army, finances or schools. She had not even time to create for herself a broad political class in which the different currents of modern thought and the different forces of her economy could find adequate expression. Therefore her political class became conservative on the one hand and demagogic on the other ; it lacked a centre of gravity and the connecting tissues of a thoroughly firm economic structure. In its place, there were ingenious men who knew how to combine and compromise among the various currents ; adroitness of government took the place of programmes, set ideals at naught, and damaged the interests of the general public. This does not mean that Italian statesmen were not worthy of the name and did not serve their country, as the saying goes, with loyalty and honour ; what we affirm is that the lack of precise ideas and clear issues resulted in the weakening of forces and the confusion of positions : this is the substance of what is

to-day known as *parliamentarism* and of what, in Italy, has been the crisis of Parliament—one of the most interesting phenomena of the crisis in the political class.

The Universities might have given vital nourishment to the new generations after the unification of the kingdom and should have assisted in the intellectual and moral formation of parties. But in the Universities in that period scepticism and positivism raged, and all ethical idealism, all religious principles, were beaten down and suppressed; youth received a training that was technically irreproachable, but the gospel came from Germany and anti-religious tendencies were copied from France. An ethical outlook on Society and the State was lacking. Thus, political life was never treated with dignity but sceptically and critically as the preserve of questionable interests and vain ambitions, as a means of exalting mediocrities above the crowd, as an occupation for idlers and parasites. Rarely was the dignity of representing the people extolled as the exercise of a collective mandate, a trusteeship for the interests of society. Political life was actively lived only by the few; the many looked upon it as an enclosed and perilous field, as a life to be shunned by honest and serious-minded citizens lest they compromise their dignity and their interests. Thus it may be said that this state of mind was at once a cause and an effect of the restriction of political life to a few. Hence, also, the non-existence of strong and healthy competing currents, and at the same time, the quasi-necessity for centralization, political, administrative and moral, in the hands of those who constituted the Government. In short, State centralism and the parliamentarism of a privileged class dried up the springs of political life in the spirit of the people, and the people increasingly lost confidence in and mental touch with the State.

There arose, nevertheless, a state of things which, at first sight, would seem to prove the contrary of what has been said—a multiplicity of parties and groups, which, as time went on, became so numerous that political life

seemed remarkably sub-divided. But this phenomenon does not conflict with what we have seen, rather is it one of its factors. The lack of two-party contests robbed the old formations of the historical Right and Left of the strength to polarize and attract the various political currents, and personal influences in the groups and coteries split up the political class itself. The non-Liberal ideologies such as those of the Radicals, Socialists, Republicans, Catholics and, as time went on, of the Nationalists, Popolari and Fascisti, came into being outside the current conception of the State and as negations of the dominion of a political class. This is one of the real causes why the Italian Parliament has lacked the healthy conflict of two distinct parties, the one holding the other in check in a normal alternation that gives to each experience of office and, at the same time, the pugnacity of an opposition.

It is a source of wonder in England that in Italy, as indeed in almost every other country of the European continent, political parties should be so numerous and the middle classes so split up. The English, accustomed to the alternation of the two parties, Conservative and Liberal, are now almost bewildered by the independent existence of a third party, Labour, which has broken out of the secular rut and started a three-cornered game, a thing unheard of in any other form of British sport, from Cricket to Rugby. The English, however, who are realists and relativists in business and in life, must be convinced that since, on the Continent, so many parties have so long existed, their existence must be due to deep and serious reasons. Not least among these reasons are the crises, latent or open, in the political classes and the direct participation in public life of other social classes than the middle classes. This participation is a fact in England, too, since the advent of the Labour Party, and it is not improbable that from the Labour Party will split off, again on political grounds, a fourth party, the Communist.

In parliamentary life, however, even where parties

are numerous, it happens that when the moment comes for them to polarize and to express themselves, they divide into two antithetical groups, i.e. of conservation and of progress, of majority and minority, of Ayes and Noes. In any case, when the time comes, if not in a stable and organic form, in a temporary form based on coalition there arises this division into two which creates a contest. But unless this phenomenon arises in accordance with stable criteria and a general policy, it does not create a continuity, a tradition, a durable force in the life of the country, which remains exposed to the oscillations of extemporized parties and tumultuous currents.

In the last thirty years of Italian life the only time when two political forces faced each other and measured their strength with vigour and on direct issues, was between 1889-1900. Then, after the tumults of May, 1898, reaction raged furiously and the Pelloux Ministry made an attempt to bring in laws restricting the rights of association and of the Press and modifying the standing orders of the Chamber. Obstructionist tactics were adopted by a number of Deputies who decided to leave the House—an extreme measure of a revolutionary nature which had as its epilogue a General Election. The result of the election was not favourable to the Pelloux Cabinet which had to resign. But throughout the whole of this period the new element in parliamentary life was contributed by anti-constitutional parties, Radicals, Socialists and Republicans, who formed the extreme wing of the Left and who in substance, led the battle. Through the revolutionary spirit of the political class, the country had a narrow escape from being thrown into disorder. To this period belongs the assassination of King Humbert I by an anarchist, and from this period dates the democratic tendency of Victor Emmanuel III and the subsequent conciliatory policy of Giolitti.

Parliament, however, did not emerge unscathed from this severe and perilous conflict in which power and victory remained with the extreme currents. From that moment,

the dominant political class avoided open parliamentary battles on issues of ideas and policies, and Cabinet crises were always made to turn on questions of procedure or secondary problems—when they were not solved outside Parliament or by decisions in Committee.

Thus the oligarchy triumphed ; Parliament, as a political organism, lost its importance, and the power of the Government grew more and more accentuated, prevailing over even the constitutional life of the State. The conflict of policies and parties was carried on outside Parliament, or became a semblance under cover of which compromises were arranged in the lobbies. Parliamentaryism prevailed over Parliament.

§ 14. *The Conflict with the New Anti-Constitutional Forces*

The preceding analysis may seem harsh and its criticisms one-sided ; it may be thought that we have not considered with sufficient detachment the benefits conferred on the country by a temperate policy which, after the very grave events of 1898-1900 maintained a comparative calm during a promising period of well-being. It is well to note that what we are studying in this chapter is the crisis of the political class in its causes and its elements. This is not a history setting out to relate events in their succession of good and evil, as they have been brought about by men or parties. It is certain that there is no political system or form of human activity in the world which does not lead to both good and evil. If, in examining the progressive decadence of the absolutist governments of the last century, we were to say that no good was ever wrought by them, we should be saying what was not true and should show ourselves partial historians. But we cannot on this account consider that period and that historical system a propitious phase of Nineteenth Century society, deserving to persist and to be defended at the expense of the liberal movement

and the constitutional *régimes* which rose up against it. We have adopted the same method in dealing with the political crisis, for politics are a synthesis, and any judgment on politics must be a synthetic judgment. Hence, while granting this period was not barren of benefits—it saw the development of economic forces, the training of the masses in party discipline, the introduction of universal suffrage, the spread of public education and the systematization of finance—we shall show how the general political trend and its practical development by the dominant class failed to correspond to the general movement which was going on in the country. Moreover, not a few of the above-mentioned benefits had been secured by other forces than those in power ; and, in any case, it was clear that the governing parties were undergoing a wear and tear that was not compensated by their inward renewal. The energies they put forth were always greater than those they acquired, while Parliament, the central organism for the elaboration and renewal of these energies, instead of accumulating, squandered them. Hence, by a phenomenon by no means new in the life of peoples, outside and on the margin of State politics there grew up new and opposing forces, and these, for good or evil, claimed to bring fresh vitality into public life and sought to impose a new political world on the old.

The main effect of this attrition of forces was that the State, having centred in itself all public activities, was dominated by an anonymous and powerful bureaucracy, and having become the point towards which all the forces of public life converged, was stricken as if by elephantiasis and lost increasingly authority and prestige. The political class, sure of itself in its parliamentary combinations and exclusive majorities, had not, in its contact with the outside world, enough strength or faith in itself. And this outside world meant the Socialist workers' trade unions, or the Nationalist groups, or the Catholic-Social organizations, or the industrial trusts, or the banks and syndicates.

Confronted with the enormous pretensions, threats and resistance of these new forces, the State, as represented by its responsible organs, negotiated and yielded in the way Mr. Baldwin did in face of the Trade Unions in July, 1925, but with this difference, that the organs of the Italian State were weaker and the political class less in training for the fight. Victory naturally increased the boldness of the leaders of the new forces. Hence the signal protection, exceeding national resources, that was accorded to the iron and steel industry, to naval armaments and to the sugar industry ; hence, also, the economic and political favours showered on fictitious co-operatives run for political ends, the laxity of the police towards certain socialist activities which openly infringed personal liberties and the rights of citizens, the exaggerated, and even illegal concessions granted to local administrations in Socialist hands, the general strikes, economic and political, even in public services, by which the community was held to ransom, the blandishments towards mass agitators who preached revolt, and the grant to the Socialists of a monopoly of the official representation of labour. All this was not the result merely of political calculation but of inherent weakness, of a lack of confidence in resistance within the bounds of legality and morality, of fear of using the authority of the State to restore order lest the structure of the State should fail to stand the strain.

On the outbreak of the Great War it was at once clear that the political class which held in hand Parliament and Government, no longer held effective dominion over the country. The parliamentary and governmental class was in fact, neutralist, and its tendency was that of Giolitti. The interventionist ferment was at work outside Parliament, outside the bureaucracy and the Army, outside the ruling policy ; it was at work among the young and in the market place. It was to the market place that Salandra hastened in the so-called ‘radiant days of May’, to force the war on a reluctant Parliament which, a few days before, had

paid homage to the neutralist Giolitti, leaving more than three hundred visiting cards at his door.

This event is the first stage in the crisis of the ruling class. Those stages were : the 'Radiant Days of May' (1915); D'Annunzio's expedition to Fiume (1919); the land raiding (1919); the Ancona riots against the sending of troops into Albania and the consequent evacuation of Vallona (1920); the occupation of the factories (1920); the Fascist occupation of the town halls (1922); the March on Rome (1922). It does not matter that the first two encroachments should have been made in the name of Nationalism, the next three in the name of Socialism, the last two in the name of Fascismo. The phenomenon is substantially the same, the attempt to supplant the powers of the State by powers extra-legal, and to wrench from the State its strength, its consent, its intervention, thus reducing the political class to a phantom.

This political class, on the eve of its fall, could not find in the State the strength to carry on a war which it had not desired and to face the difficulties of a peace for which it had made no preparation. It failed in the task, as we have seen in the last chapter, through the enormous difficulties created by the war itself, through the mistaken war aims, through the lack of unanimity among the Italian people, through the set-backs of the Paris Conference, through the question of Fiume, through Bolshevik propaganda.

When the war was over, Signor Orlando believed that he could undertake the renovation of the State and give renewed vigour to its political formation by creating a Commission of nearly seven hundred members, divided up into a great number of sub-committees, for the study of the more urgent measures. Because of its excessive size it was called the *Commissionissima*. It seemed a Byzantine Council, an anachronism in the midst of post-war ferment. To be sure, experienced and proved men, students and technical experts, politicians and financiers, laboured for months and months to build up theories and apply them

on a shifting and elusive plane, making theories on new and complex phenomena from the visual angle of a vanished past. Reading to-day the dusty minutes of the Commission, one has the impression of a dream. Yet there were many sound ideas, not a few honest suggestions and useful proposals. What was lacking was an animating spirit that would sweep the people with it, giving them new heart in the hour of greatest joy in victory and in the hour of greatest discouragement in the economic crisis and the crisis of peace.

If the Commission was soulless, Parliament had become sterile and mute—above all, mute. The Italian Parliament had functioned very little during the war, for fear lest political discussions should weaken the spirit of the country—and this at a time when other Parliaments were in almost permanent session. After the war though its term had already expired it was not immediately renewed and was rarely convened. It failed in its task and in its function of control and synthesis during the tragic period of the Paris Conference.

The Government had already usurped the powers of Parliament. Indeed, the war had accustomed it to legislate by means of Decrees of which over a thousand had been passed, not only on matters concerning the war—in conformity with the law granting it ‘plenary powers’—but even on subjects absolutely foreign to it such as the reform of the Provincial School Boards. After the war this most dangerous system became a normal and unchallenged procedure and came, moreover, to be transmuted into a delegation of plenary powers even in matters of civil and penal rights. Thus the whole sum of the powers of the State fell into the hands of the few men constituting the Government.

This was the logical consequence of the premises we have been studying: the concentration of all the powers of the State and of civil life in a very few men, and the exhaustion of the political class, which, in order to stand,

identified itself with the State. Hence it seemed to it that the brakes and checks which every parliamentary system brings to the manufacture of laws, impeded the rapid working of the administration and, at the same time, afforded a means of criticism which interfered with its working. This was a great error, both in the legislative and in the political fields. Laws and decrees, passed without preliminary discussion, without the necessary preparation of public opinion, without a suitable ripening, were like seeds fallen in arid ground unwatered by the rain. The seeds shrivel and the germs perish. Thus it came about that, at a few months' distance, new measures had to be adopted modifying or cancelling those already taken. Where there seemed to be fecundity because of the growing number of laws, there was instead sterility, because the application of the laws was troublesome or impossible.

On the other hand the failure of Parliament to function destroyed its authority and vitality. Its members, instead of turning their attention to the study of bills, spent their time seeking for favours or plotting to bring about some ministerial crisis which would put them again on top. The journalists, unprepared for and unable to follow the hail of decrees, unable to give life in the Press to the underlying legislative purpose, took to magnifying little topical incidents and squabbles between parliamentary groups and political leaders.

The few voices that called attention to the problems of peace, of economy, of constitutionalism, were stifled. Any attempts—such as were made by the present writer—to promote freedom of trade, of education, of trade unions, of local government and to defend the interests of the South were looked upon as vexatious attempts to domineer.

The political class was thus in the last spasms of its vast crisis, and these reacted on the State. At the most difficult moment of Italian public life, the class that had ruled the State for nearly half a century was found wanting, less through the deficiency or malice of its men than because they found

in its ideas no vital spark to revive in them faith in the Liberal-Democratic State they represented, and in the constitutional institutions of which they had held the monopoly. Meanwhile the new parties, which in one way or another were opposed to the Liberal-Democratic conception of the State and of politics grew in strength. These parties were three : Socialism, Popularism, Fascism.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIALISM—POPULARISM—FASCISM

§ 15. *Socialism*

ITALIAN Socialism has behind it thirty years of history, and in that history there are interesting pages. Several times in the course of this work mention has been made of the position adopted by Socialism in the various phases of Italian politics ; it will be well to bear in mind what has been already written in order to understand the part played by Socialism and by the party which has been its most lively and complete exponent.

Italian Socialism, which arose more than thirty years ago out of the disordered ferment of economic distress and out of the anarchist movement, first asserted itself as a working class party (1880) ; then as the Italian Workers' Party (1891) ; then as the Workers' Socialist Party (1893) ; and finally took the name of the Italian Socialist Party (1895).

The Italian political mentality does not express itself in great theories and intellectual speculations ; it keeps a middle course between theory and practice which makes the various movements appear more practical, though, as a matter of fact, they remain on the surface and are therefore less conscious and less stable. Italian Socialism, like Italian Liberalism, has not been expounded by profound thinkers, nor has it given birth to vivifying and original theories, like the Socialism of France or Germany. Its exponents have been men capable of putting it into practice in forms suited to our native climate, that is, either moderate and accommodating or fanatical and intransigent, and who have found in

theory not an inconvenient obstacle but simply a prop. Socialist writers have spent their time in popularizing foreign theories, or have concerned themselves with practical problems and propaganda ; a juridical and economic Socialism of markedly Italian character has been wanting. Italian Socialists take their bearings from Marx and Sorel, whose words have been received more as a faith than as a science.

One of the reasons for the phenomenon of a Socialism almost exclusively directed to practical organization is to be found in the circumstances of its growth in Italy. It has had two zones of development, the agrarian, in the Valley of the Po, between Emilia and Romagna, and the industrial, circumscribed by the triangle Milan-Genoa-Turin. In the other centres, such as Venice, Rome, Florence, Naples, and Palermo, Socialist phenomena have been either reflex, urban, or concentrated in small zones round developing factories, or in public enterprises such as the railways and postal services, or, finally, have taken the form of agitations among the drifting masses drawn from the countryside by the growing urbanism.

The Socialist movement in agriculture, where it has had only a limited field of action, kept to a strictly economic conception and confined its activities to the organization of wage-earners and the development of co-operation, finding wide scope in the zones of reclaimed marsh-land and in those thickly populated and of highly intensive and industrialized cultivation. It was therefore limited, and proper only to a more progressive section. The real agrarian problem of Italy, and that which is typical of the South and constitutes one of the gravest elements of crisis in Italian life, was never studied or faced by the Socialist Party. To the industrial movement and in general to that of Upper Italy, this Party nearly always sacrificed every legitimate agrarian aspiration and every reasonable attempt to raise the condition of the rural classes of the South.

Italian industry, in comparison with that of other

countries, has developed late and only in certain provinces, nor has it in every case been flourishing and independent. Little by little as it progressed, the industrial proletariat formed a centre of Socialist propaganda, not only in imitation of what was happening in other countries, but also as a result of the difficult living conditions due to labour competition and other forms of exploitation, natural at the beginning of a great undertaking, in Italy as elsewhere. The demand for higher wages, for the prohibition of child labour, for the limitation of night work and unhealthy trades, for the regulation of the employment of women, in short, all the provisions for the protection of labour, became the immediate propagandist aims of the social currents in general and of the Socialists in particular, so that the latter drew to themselves the mass of the industrial proletariat, to be organized in Labour Councils, and later, after wider experience, nationally united in the General Confederation of Labour.

In this work of legitimate defence, and the endeavour to raise the conditions of the workers, the Socialists were ~~not~~ alone ; but they had a stronger voice and more rapid organization because they more easily exploited the workers' resentment and woes, preaching class war to-day and the Earthly Paradise of Socialist society to-morrow. In this propaganda, which was bound to result in protective labour legislation, the Socialist leaders emphasized their anti-bourgeois and anti-State attitude and their materialistic and anti-religious conception of life. In the meantime, they gained the right to employ an argument which had more effect in holding the masses—that success was not a concession from the bourgeoisie but had been won by the proletariat. Socialist anti-clericalism did not displease the Liberal political class because it was an arm that could be used against the Church. The Government not only approved of protective labour laws and organized a special Labour Department in the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce but, by regulations and laws, laid

it down that the representation of the working classes should be a Socialist monopoly, while by economic measures it especially favoured the development of the Socialist co-operatives and Trade Unions. And, as if to seal this by an unfair act of partiality, it denied all recognition and representation to the institutions of the Christian-Social movement, on the pretext that these were denominational in character and therefore contrary to the principle of Liberty.

This period saw the beginning of the second phase of Italian Socialism which now came to exercise a practical action in the economic field under the dual protection of the State and of the industrialists. The latter derived from it considerable advantages, for with the improved standard of living of the workers came an improvement in production ; and the closer the worker was bound up with the destinies of production the more easily did his employers obtain subsidies, premiums and protective duties from the Government. Politically the Socialist Party consolidated itself, leaning more and more on the economic organizations of the workers, and, administratively and politically, it was leagued with the Radical and Democratic Parties in what were known as 'Popular Blocs'. These were formed as a counter-move to the Conservative reaction that had given rise to the deplorable events of 1898, of which mention has been made, when the chiefs of the Socialists, Republicans and Christian Democrats of Milan were condemned by court martial. Such *blocs* were the natural outcome of the democratic policy required to ensure the tranquillity of the country after the tragic death of Humbert I.

However, while the Radicals compromised themselves with the Government to the point of becoming one element in a coalition, and ended by losing their place as centre of the Extreme Left Opposition, and while the Republicans grew nerveless, in every parliamentary and municipal election the Socialists saw the number of their representatives increase ; they remained the only public

opponents of a Government of which they enjoyed the favours and support, and which all the time they secretly blackmailed.

Having taken up this position, Italian Socialism lost more and more the character of a revolutionary movement and began to penetrate with greater efficacy the lower middle classes and especially—with a view to economic advantages and legal protection—the organizations of State and Municipal employees. It was natural, therefore, that Socialism should have internal crises of its own, because it is not practicable to operate on possibilist lines and at the same time to maintain an anti-bourgeois bias, directed towards class war and Direct Action. The conflict between possibilists and revolutionaries was inherent in the very structure of the Party. The most considerable of the several crises of Italian Socialism was that caused by the Reformists, who, in consideration of the organic and parliamentary benefits already obtained, attributed greater importance to the method of reform than to that of revolution. The Reformists were expelled from the Party in 1912, on the motion of Mussolini who was then chief of the revolutionary faction which had opposed the Libyan War and the homage paid to the King on his escape from an anarchist attempt. Bissolati with his friends formed a separate party calling itself the Reformist Socialist Party; it had little scope and lasted only till after the war, its last form being the Reformist Socialist Parliamentary Group. Within the Socialist Party, denominations and tendencies were numerous and the discussions in Congresses and in the Press interminable. All managed to combine practical possibilities with theoretical intransigence. For thirty years the exponent and interpreter of this insuperable dualism was Filippo Turati, a man of no ordinary ability, a skilful Parliamentarian, with the gift of dominating assemblies. He expressed in abstract syntheses and in negative and therefore impracticable combinations, the states of mind of the numerous Congresses and representative

Socialist meetings ; he was an adroit manipulator of resolutions, time and again succeeding in making opposing tendencies balance each other without reaching a solution. So that often, events took it upon themselves to give a practical interpretation to what the Socialist Congresses, in their Byzantine deliberations, expressed with interminable tortuosity. In short, they strove at least on paper to preserve their class and revolutionary orthodoxy and to adapt it to the useful and accommodating contingencies of daily life and political convenience.

§ 16. *Revolution or No Revolution*

The acid test for the Socialist Party as for every other came with the war and its aftermath. We have already seen what were the attitude and the action of Socialism in this period in regard to political events ; here we need only add a few touches to bring the organization of the party into greater relief. In regard to the war, the Socialist Party, as an *official* organism, held an equivocal course between neutrality and opposition, and drew the maximum advantage from what was known as Industrial Mobilization, by which nearly all the chief Socialist organizers in industry and the more skilled masses were withheld from the front and kept in the workshops, while the requirements of war production brought a large number of casual workers under the control of the Socialist organization. The fact that, after the outbreak of war, the neutralist currents in the middle classes adopted an equivocal attitude and co-operated with the interventionists in Relief Committees, left the Socialists alone in their opposition to the war—a circumstance which gained them the sympathies of those who dreamed of a pacifist offensive on the part of the international proletariat.

While the official Socialists adopted this attitude, the Reformists and a group of Revolutionary Socialists having broken away from the official party accepted the war but without giving up their own ideals ; of these the most

notable politically were Bissolati and Mussolini. The latter left the editorship of the *Avanti* and, in October, 1914, founded the *Popolo d'Italia*, which then called itself Socialist-Interventionist. How and why Mussolini should have passed from exaggerated neutralism to enthusiastic interventionism has remained one of the enigmas of his tempestuous and lucky political career.

Politically the part played by the official Socialist Party during the war was very small in relation to its ever increasing strength and parliamentary possibilities. It was, however, maturing the elements of its rapid ascent after the war, a rise as excessive as its leaders were unequal to the task of directing it to a sure goal. The malcontents and the demobilized soldiers who swelled the ranks of Socialism had only negative ideas. They were the simple expression of unrest and discontent, the emotional result of accumulated griefs and disillusionments, the manifestation of psychological torment and economic upheaval, which overcame the Socialist character of the party itself in theory and in practice.

The Socialists made a first mistake in believing that in a short time they could organize all this amorphous mass, and the further mistake of recruiting it, without technical or mental preparation, by means of propagandists and organizers, and in building for it too fine a castle of new fortunes—on paper. Socialism became the profiteer of politics and behaved like one of the new rich. It made another mistake in believing that it would be possible to establish an economic dictatorship of the proletariat in Italy, in the very country where property is most split up, the classes most numerous, middle class economy firmly rooted, and the population dense—circumstances unpropitious even for a formal and external experiment in collectivism. Yet another mistake was to believe that by means of an economic dictatorship a political dictatorship could be attained, whereas the reverse is the case : through political dictatorship one may attempt to reach economic

dictatorship. I say attempt, for not every attempt succeeds, and in Italy such a success was, and is, unlikely.

Moreover Italian Socialism, or rather its responsible leaders, who for so many years had been possibilist and in substance Reformist, had to wrestle anew at end of the war period with the insoluble dilemma : Revolution or no Revolution ? Each time the problem presented itself they would answer, ' In theory a Revolution, yes ; in practice, for the present, no'. And while feverish agitators promoted heedless strikes, exaggerated tumults and mob rule, and created, here and there, especially in Emilia and Romagna, what were known as Red Baronies, the leaders continued the old system of treating with the Government so as to obtain the greatest possible advantages for Trade Unions and Co-operatives, creating new bodies and new consortia, pursuing a scheme of State Socialism in agreement with bureaucrats and plutocrats. The ultra-Protectionist tariff of June, 1921, is the product of this mentality which persisted even in the most difficult hours.

After the experiments of the great strike and the occupation of the land and of the factories, possibilists and Revolutionaries could no longer exist side by side in the same movement. In January, 1921, the Communists broke away from the Socialists. For the same reason later on, in 1922, the Socialists themselves split into Unitarians (equivalent to the Social-Democrats, Reformists, or Labour) and Maximalists, or Revolutionary Socialists. The former are affiliated to Amsterdam, the latter are in relations with Moscow though without giving their entire adhesion, while the Communists are affiliated to the Third Soviet International.

The General Confederation of Labour includes workers of all three parties, and has tried to keep itself in the purely economic field ; actually, however, the prevailing tendency of the leaders is Unitarian, while the masses feel the local influences of the various currents, with a leaning towards Communism.

Just as the political class was involved in a crisis through a monopoly of power, so a crisis arose in Socialism for lack of the responsibility of power. The elections of November, 1919, sent 154 Socialists to the Chamber, and they then formed the strongest and best organized Group. But they were biased against collaboration, and, when the hour struck, would not agree to co-operate in a bourgeois *régime*. In their eyes, the possession of seats in Parliament did not mean a recognition of the constitutional *régime* or the acceptance of responsible positions, still less positions in the Government; it was to them only a means of preparing the revolution, no matter how rhetorical and impracticable its character. When Giolitti, after the Communist secession, proposed to the King the dissolution of the Chamber, he alluded to the possibility of Socialist collaboration in the document annexed to the Decree of dissolution. The refusal to collaborate in the Government put the Socialists outside the pale of parliamentary reality, just as they had put themselves outside the pale of reality, as far as the proletariat was concerned, by declining mob revolution. The dilemma above-mentioned, Revolution or no Revolution, resolved itself into a negation which stultified the Socialists themselves. It marked the collapse of their fictitious post-war power, and brought them back to their smaller pre-war proportions.

Socialism, as a mob revolution, fell in 1920, and its fall was sealed by the breaking away of the Communists. Socialism, as represented by the economic phenomenon of State Socialism, failed as soon as the monopoly of the various State or quasi-State labour organisms ended. Socialism, as a monopoly of the representation of the organized working-class, vanished when Italian political life was invaded by the other parties with a following among the masses, first Popularism and then Fascism.

As we saw in the last chapter, Socialism in Italy was one of the determining factors in the crisis of the political classes which it helped to render more acute. Its action

was, in theory, constantly anti-State, no matter whether the Reformist or the Revolutionary current were uppermost. Moreover, while Socialism was hostile to the Liberal State as the expression of the middle classes, it evolved a character substantially conservative. In fact, discarding its anti-monarchical bias, especially after the accession of Victor Emmanuel III, it rendered possible a phase of the Monarchy that was formally democratic even to the point of granting universal suffrage and Proportional Representation. Further, by agreeing to link its destinies with those of big industry, the Socialist Party contributed to consolidate a group of interests which, little by little, became determining factors in the economic and financial policy of successive Governments. Finally, by limiting its own political action to verbal protests and general affirmations, without ever assuming the responsibilities of Government, it helped to keep intact the *petit-bourgeois* and fundamentally reactionary spirit of the political class, and thus to maintain a general trend hostile to the widest conception of democracy and to the participation of the masses in political power.

The 'Royal Conquest', by which the unity of Italy was achieved, was thus pursued to the point of mortgaging the spirit of renovation which should have been the outcome of the Socialist movement, a spirit which remains largely stifled. Socialist revolutionary rhetoric has been as thick foam on a little beer at the bottom of a glass.

At the moment when preparation for revolutionary activities was approaching a climax, Socialist power was drained by the secessions due, the first, to Bissolati's Reformism, the next to Mussolini's Interventionist Revolutionarism and, the third—that of the Unitarians—to Turati's possibilism. Those secessions were a series of checks which manifested, each in its own fashion, a fund of conservatism and transformism characteristically Italian.

The fundamental reason is to be sought in the nature of the economy represented by these phenomena. As we have seen, big industry in Italy was late, uncertain, immature,

and only local in extent. Two thirds of the factory workers are tied to other domestic pursuits. Many followers of Socialism belong to the black-coated and small shop-keeping class, and there is no link between Socialist industrial workers and Socialist peasants. Thus, the various currents, besides revealing the different outlooks of the leaders and emphasising questions of method, have always represented general states of mind, uncertain and disturbed because of uncertainty and disturbance in the economy to which they correspond, and without any sure base or stability of interests.

The present phase can be defined as follows. The Unitarian Socialists represent the complex of economic interests in the labour world that is concentrated in the factories, Trade Unions, and Co-operatives, with, in addition, the section of the lower middle classes and home craftsmen which accepts the main ideas of Socialism but seeks to modify their method of realization. The Maximalists represent the section of the workers that is least stable, least skilled and the most exposed to rapid changes, who therefore, by temperament and state of mind, have recourse to ideas of Direct Action. Lastly, the Communists comprise the more logical and more violent, those who still feel the influence of Russia and who, tired of the limited reformism of the Unitarians and of the wordy revolutionism of the Maximalists, aim at the overthrow of the political standards of the present State by a total economic conquest on the part of the proletariat.

In the political field, the first correspond more or less to English labour, or to German Social Democracy ; in substance, their methods come within the lines of democracy. The second uphold both democratic and revolutionary action, and the last are enthusiastic revolutionaries aiming at the establishment of a dictatorship of the Lenin type.

Having thus defined the position of what may be called the Socialist Parties, we must add that, since the battle for the reform of Labour legislation was practically over,

the Socialist monopoly of the representation of the workers broken down, and political action differentiated from strictly Trade Unionist action, the culminating point should have been a political contest. But the Socialists were suffocated by prejudices theoretical and tactical. They did see what had happened to the Socialisms of the various States of Europe, how they had found it necessary to come out of their isolation, overcome their prejudices, and, when the moment came, cross the Rubicon of bourgeois collaboration. Till they could do this, Italian Socialism was doomed to turn round and round like a dog after its own tail.

§ 17. *Popularism*

On 18 January, 1919, the following appeal was issued to the Italian people :—

‘To all men free and strong, who, in this grave hour, feel the high duty of co-operating for the supreme ends of the Fatherland, without prejudice or preconception, we make appeal ; so that united they may uphold the ideals of justice and freedom. And while the representatives of the victorious nations are met to prepare the bases of a just and lasting peace, the political parties of every country must contribute to strengthen those tendencies and those principles which will serve to avert all peril of fresh war, to give a stable order to the nations, to actualize the ideals of social justice and improve the social conditions of labour, to develop the spiritual and material energies of all countries, united in the solemn bond of the League of Nations.

‘And as it is not just to compromise the benefits of the victory won by immense sacrifices for the defence of the rights of peoples and for the highest ideals of civilization, it is the duty of all healthy democracies, all popular governments, without exception, to find the real equilibrium of national rights, the supreme international interests, and the perennial motives of the peaceful progress of society.

‘ Therefore we uphold the political and moral programme, the patrimony of the Christian people, recorded in august words, and to-day defended by Wilson as a fundamental element in the future order of the world, and reject the imperialisms which create dominating nations and mature violent upheavals ; therefore we demand that the League of Nations should recognize just national aspirations, hasten the coming of universal disarmament, abolish the secrecy of treaties, effect the freedom of the seas, uphold social legislation in international relations, equality of labour, religious liberty against all sectarian oppression, and that it should have the strength to apply sanctions and the means to protect the weak peoples against the oppressive tendencies of the strong.

‘ To the better future of our Italy—secure within her frontiers and the surrounding seas—who, by the virtue of her sons in the sacrifices of the war, has, with victory, fulfilled her unity, welded together her national consciousness, we dedicate all our activities with fervour of enthusiasm and firmness of enlightened aims.

‘ For a centralizing State, seeking to restrict all organizing powers and all civic and individual activities, we would substitute, on a constitutional ground, a State truly popular, recognizing the limits of its activity, respectful of the natural centres and organizations—the family, the classes, the Communes—respectful of individual personality and encouraging private initiative. And that the State should be the sincerest expression of the will of the people, we ask for the reform of Parliament on a basis of Proportional Representation, not excluding votes for women, and an elective Senate to represent directly the national organisms, academic, administrative and trade unionist ; we desire the reform of the bureaucracy and of the administration of justice, and the simplification of legislation ; we call for the legal recognition of the classes, communal autonomy, the reform of the provincial bodies and the widest decentralization of regional units.

‘ But these reforms would be vain and empty, if we did not claim, as the soul of the new society, the true sense of liberty responding to the civil maturity of our people and the highest development of its energies : religious liberty not only for the individual but also for the Church, for the unfolding of her spiritual mission in the world ; liberty of teaching, without a State monopoly ; liberty of class organization without preference or privilege for any Party ; communal and local liberties in accordance with the glorious Italian traditions.

‘ This ideal of liberty does not seek to disorganize the State but is essentially organic in the renewal of energies and activities which should find at the centre co-ordination, valuation, defence and progressive development—shaping themselves into vital nuclei able to check or modify the disintegrating currents, the agitations promoted in the name of a systematic class war and anarchic revolution, and draw from the heart of the people the elements of conservation and of progress, giving its value to authority as at once force and exponent of the sovereignty of the people and social collaboration.

‘ The necessary and urgent reforms in the field of social welfare and assistance, in Labour legislation, in the formation and safeguarding of small holdings, should aim at the raising of the working classes ; while the growth of the economic forces of the country, the increase of production, the sound and equable systematization of customs, the reform of taxation, the development of the mercantile marine, the solution of the Southern problem, the internal colonization of the *Latifundia*, the reorganization of the schools and the fight against illiteracy, will serve to overcome the post-war crisis and to treasure up the rightful and hoped-for fruits of victory.

‘ We come forward in political life with our banner moral and social, drawing our inspiration from the sound principles of Christianity, which consecrated the great civilizing mission of Italy—a mission that even to-day,

in the new order of the peoples, should shine out against the attempts of new imperialisms, in face of the anarchic upheavals of the great Empires that are fallen, in face of the Socialist demagogies which seek the materialization of all idealism, in face of the old sectarian liberalisms which, in the strength of the organism of the Centralized State, resist the new currents of emancipation.

‘To all men morally free and socially evolved ; to as many as, in their love for their Fatherland, know how to conjoin the just sense of national rights and interests with a sane internationalism, to as many as support and respect the moral virtues of our people, in the name of the *Italian Popular Party* we make appeal, and call for their adhesion to our *Programme*.’

This Appeal, together with the programme and statutes, represented the content and form of a new political party, the *Partito Popolare Italiano*. After seven years of existence and considerable battles, Appeal, programme and statutes remain unaltered, while the various phases through which the new party has passed prove its novelty, its vitality, and its strength.

Above all, the Italian Popular Party, by its very constitution, fulfilled a national task of the highest importance such that, had this been its only achievement, it would have been entitled to a place in history. In speaking of the relations between the Church and the unified Italian State we recalled the secession of Italian Catholics following the counsel of abstention contained in the celebrated words of the *Non expedit*. This counsel, given by a Roman Ecclesiastical Congregation in 1867, was preceded by the political stand taken by a nucleus of Piedmontese intransigents before the war of 1859-60 ; in disagreement with the internal and ecclesiastical policy of Cavour, they started the cry of ‘Neither elected nor electors’, a cry which at that time met with great fortune. Subsequently, abstentionism took the form of a religious protest and was intense in certain zones of Upper Italy, being observed especially by the

clergy and the organized laity of the Catholic movement. Much later, and owing to anti-clerical reprisals on the part of the Government of the time, the Holy See, in 1895, assumed direct responsibility for this policy, declaring that 'the *non expedit* signified a prohibition', and only in 1904 was this veto attenuated by Pius X, when exceptions were allowed in special cases. Even then, though the breach was widened in the political elections of 1909 and 1913, the veto and its ecclesiastical motive remained fundamental, restricting the activities of Catholics in public life because of their inevitable repercussions in the religious field and on the relations between Church and State.

Italian intervention in the Great War showed clearly why it was necessary to draw a distinction between the attitude of the Holy See, which had to remain neutral and above the conflict by reason of the very nature of its exalted religious function, and the attitude of Italians belonging to the Catholic Associations, who had not only to fulfil their duty as citizens but to share in the moral effort of their country. The appointment of the militant Catholic, Sig. Meda, as Minister in Boselli's National Coalition Cabinet of 1916, was a sign of the new state of things— notwithstanding the reservations made by the *Osservatore Romano*.

The logical consequences of these historical premises were drawn almost immediately after the Armistice by a nucleus of Catholics who, united round the present writer, thought to found a party of their own, autonomous, depending neither from the ecclesiastical authorities nor from the Catholic Associations, but taking on itself direct responsibility in the political field, and at the same time remaining distinct from other political parties. The programme contained, however, so many ethical and religious elements that, without altering its political character, the new party was easily recognisable as the expression of the Catholic Social movement, which in fact, formed the strongest nucleus and the most active tendency in the Catholic Associations.

Without wishing to give this event an undue importance, it is impossible not to recognize that it marked the end of that negative struggle of Catholics against the unified State, a struggle which had deprived the State of the political co-operation of a considerable group of citizens and of those very elements that might have given the greatest value to ethical and religious motives in public life.

And that the new party represented a political force of no small account was seen in the next General Election of November, 1919, when the Italian Popular Party gained at one blow ninety-nine seats out of five hundred and eight, about a fifth of the whole Chamber.

How the Popular Party was able in a few months to gain this position is no mystery. All those men who, for more than thirty years, had worked for the co-operatives and trade unions and other economic institutions of the Catholic Social type, or had belonged to the young men's clubs and other cultural associations, poured into it. To it came also many who, in the tragedy of the war and after, had felt the awakening in their consciences of religious feelings that in many cases had been stifled by a positivist education. Nor were they all without experience of public life ; many had shared in the administration of Communes and Provinces, or of charitable bodies ; others had already been members of Parliament, or members of the councils of the more important National Associations ; several were University Professors, others journalists and writers, so that the new contribution to public life could be said to be mature, and certainly was not extemporized or chaotic. Intellectually, it drew its origins from the movement of Christian Democracy that manifested itself in Italy after 1895, having as its chief theorist the late Giuseppe Toniolo, Professor of Economics at the University of Pisa.

The Popular Party, by its programme and position, can be likened to the *German Centre*, but it was careful from the beginning *not to call itself a Catholic Party*, since religion should not be made a basis of political divisions,

above all in a country like Italy which is, by a very large majority, Catholic ; also to rule out any possible connection with the old political tendencies of a section of Catholics called by their adversaries Clericals.

The Popular Party, taking its stand on constitutional grounds, admits, as a necessary postulate, liberty civil and political, and would intensify the democratic system by universal suffrage, votes for women, Proportional Representation, an elective Senate, local autonomy. The most trenchant affirmations of its programme are in favour of the freedom of religion, of the schools, of associations, and of economy. Its chief point of attack is against State centralism and political monopolies, and for the constitution of the Region as a self-governing entity. In the international field it is positively pacifist ; in the first Popular Congress of June, 1919, it denounced the spirit of the Peace Treaties of the Paris Conference and the nationalistic tendencies of the various peoples. Definitely favourable to class organization, to the integrity of the family, to private property and especially to small holdings, the Popular Party promoted and favoured that workers' movement which is inspired by the ethics of Christianity.

With this position, theoretical and practical, and with the political strength it had acquired, it soon found itself in the parliamentary field and in the country, committed to difficult manœuvres and arduous struggles.

In the Chamber of Deputies, after the Elections of November, 1919, which were carried out on the system of P.R., it took its stand as a Centre party, the first serious and compact Central Party that had appeared on the horizon of Italian Parliamentary life. And since the Socialist deputies reached the imposing number of one hundred and fifty-four, and the constitutional opposition of the Nationalist and Conservative Right numbered about sixty, the Popolari were a necessary element in the Government majority. Thus, with greater or less enthusiasm they helped to form the Cabinets of Nitti, Giolitti, Bonomi

and Facta, in order to work a majority capable of withstanding the hammer-blows with which the extreme parties tried to dismantle the parliamentary organism. Between the Popular Group, however, and the four distinct groups of the Liberal Democrats, there was a fundamental lack of understanding which made the parliamentary majority heterogeneous and fluctuating, and was the cause of the several ministerial crises; above all, there was a lack of substantial points of convergence in the two programmes, so that three years were spent in a series of political compromises. And if this had only limited consequences in the administrative field, it was big with fatal consequences in the field strictly political.

The first divergence was with the Nitti Cabinet, on a matter of internal and social politics, and concerned the Socialists. It was said that Nitti had the Popular Party as his lawful wife and the Socialist Party as his mistress; it was a *ménage à trois*. In truth, Nitti never wished to engage in open contest with the Socialists, towards whom he showed himself broad and tolerant; but he said that he had found the State with no safeguard, and had nearly to triple the number of Carabineers and create the corps of the *Guardia Regia* to maintain public order. Nitti's political attitude was actually philo-Socialist, or at least he yielded readily to Socialist exactions, and did not uphold the moral, political, and economic currents that strove to neutralize their power. Among these currents the strongest and most decided was the Popular Party. It was not only in the Chamber that there were lively conflicts between Popolari and Socialists, but even more in the field of organization and propaganda. If the Popolari in 1919 could rally round their banner about one million two hundred thousand votes, compared with the one million five hundred thousand of the Socialists, they owed it to having met them face to face in open contest, especially in the countryside and in the workshop. The Popolari kept to a method strictly ethical—no violence, no lawlessness. They

suffered violence, but they never yielded to the temptation to answer in the same tone. This constituted their moral superiority.

The position taken up by the Popolari culminated in the general strikes of January, 1920; that of the Post, Telegraphs and Telephones, and that of the railways, both promoted by the Socialists. The economic character of such strikes was a mask for their political aim, and the Popolari opposed them; the Christian Leagues, upheld by the Popular Party, kept the public services going, so that the strikes could be considered a failure. Only the Government, instead of supporting those who resisted, yielded once and again, and made a compromise with the Socialists, leaving the organizers of the Christian Leagues exposed to the reprisals of their companions and to the contempt of the employees of the various ministries. In such conditions, the Popolari were obliged to break away from the Nitti Ministry. In consideration of the parliamentary difficulties, their secession was gradual; first they withdrew their men from the Cabinet, and then, since Nitti persevered in his tolerance towards the lawless excesses of the Socialists in Emilia and Lombardy, voted against it.

The same phenomenon was repeated under Giolitti. The latter wished to have the Popolari with him and promised them the liberty of the schools; but his attitude in the financial and political field led, as we have seen, to the occupation of the factories. The latent conflict between Giolitti and the Popolari on this occasion showed itself in a remarkable manner. Giolitti promised the Socialists the control of the factories, and, in studying the question, ignored the representatives of the Italian Confederation of Workers, the central organization of the Christian Trade Unions, while these, on the other hand, in agreement with the Popolari, ruled out the principle of workers' control, upholding the co-partnership system instead.

The conflict culminated in the dual report to the Chamber

of Deputies, but it had no further issue owing to the complicated turn taken by parliamentary events.

§ 18. *The Intervention of the Fascist Party*

At this point the Fascist Party came to make a third in the field among the political parties with a mass following. Like the others, it was of recent formation, dating from March, 1919, but, for a year and a half, its existence was localized and restricted. A genuine war-product, it included the more lively ferments both of D'Annunzian *arditismo* and interventionist socialism. Born at the time of the Bolshevik movement, it was animated by similar sentiments. The main heads of Mussolini's Programme of 1919-20 were : ' the national constituent assembly to be understood as an Italian section of the international constituent assembly of the peoples ; the proclamation of the Italian Republic ; the decentralization of the executive power ; the restriction of the functions of the State to the civil and political direction of national affairs ; the abolition of the Senate and of the political police ; an elective magistrature independent of the Executive ; abolition of all caste titles such as Prince, Duke, etc. ; abolition of conscription ; general disarmament and prohibition of the manufacture of war materials ; freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion, of association, of the Press, of propaganda, of agitation individual and collective ; winding-up of industrial and financial limited liability companies, suppression of banks and stock exchanges ; a census of personal wealth and the confiscation of unproductive capital ; banishment of parasites that do not make themselves useful to society ; the grant of the land to associated peasants ; abolition of secret diplomacy, an open international policy inspired by the principle of the solidarity of the peoples and their independence in the confederation of States.'

When we see that to-day Mussolini's policy is the direct

opposite of that laid down in his Programme we need not be greatly surprised. Fascism was the result less of ideas than of feelings; and, as time went on, it made use of the states of mind of its followers and adherents. There was a time when it was disposed to influence the Socialist masses which Mussolini sought to win back after the war. His whole campaign of 1919 and 1920 was in competition with the Socialists. During the occupation of the factories he not only showed himself favourable to the step taken by the workers but glorified it as the sign of a new economic order. Mindful of the revolt that he had led in the provinces of Romagna before the war, he threatened revolt and expeditions at every turn, in the columns of the *Popolo d'Italia*. When, in the beginning of July, 1919, there were popular risings against the cost of living, he not only applauded the crowds that looted the shops, but sought to prove that Fascisti, not Socialists, had urged them on, and in a measure this was true. During the strike of 1920, Mussolini incited the working masses to fight to the finish, and started the cry: 'the railways for the railwaymen!', accusing the Socialists of not being revolutionaries in earnest. The land-hunger of the peasants in 1919 found in Mussolini a new champion. He wrote: 'We are for the land for the peasants. The State is a thing that the peasant does not know. The peasant wants the land and must have his land.'

Fascism, then, in those two years, appears as Socialism disguised under a cloak of victory and of national interests, while Socialism was, on the other hand, a disguised Bolshevism under a cloak of war neutralism and the Workers' International. Thus presented, Fascism made a noise, but did not increase the number of its adepts who came more from the lower middle classes and war-unemployed than from the workers, so that there was a fundamental divergence between its ideals and the interests it really represented: it lacked an outlet.

And the outlet for its forces was opened by the old

Giolitti. Towards the end of 1920, when he had got over the dead point of the occupation of the factories, giving the country the impression that there was an understanding between himself and the Socialists, he thought it would be well to have other forces in hand which he could bring into play against the latter, without assuming direct responsibility for their actions. He could thus hope to bend the moderate section of Socialism towards collaboration, as he had hoped to do for a long time. For this purpose he could not lean on the Popolari, whom he knew to be hostile to him, because of his methods of government and because of the distrust always shown him by the present writer, then Political Secretary of the Party. Therefore Giolitti thought to lean on the Fascisti, but his intention was to use them and at the opportune moment get rid of them, after having gained the means of compromising their chiefs and neutralizing their action should they rebel against him. With this plan, which corresponded to his well-known methods of government, he organized the national *bloccs* for the municipal elections of the Autumn of 1920, against the Socialists and against the Popolari, who fought each for themselves ; the Fascisti, in Upper and Central Italy took part not only with candidates and a very limited electoral contribution, but, and this was what counted, with armed bands which intimidated rural districts and towns. Part of their arms were those left over from D'Aunzio's expedition to Rome, and part were secretly taken from the military stores. The police made a show of checking and pursuing lawless and violent actions, but they nearly always arrived too late and hardly ever found the responsible persons.

The issue of the municipal elections in the big cities and the first use of the Fascist Irregulars (*Squadristi*) encouraged the capitalist classes and reactionary currents, and incited them to demand a fresh General Election in a year's time. To this contributed the grave events of Bologna and Ferrara, where the victory of the Socialists

exposed their adversaries to violent and sanguinary reprisals.

Giolitti continued to carry on his dual policy, giving the Fascisti support in deed and denying it in word, giving the Socialists support in word and denying it in deed, hoping to turn the tables on them both. What followed was the consequence of this situation : The Socialists, as we have seen, separated from the Communists, while the Fascisti drew cautiously towards the Nationalists. Giolitti believed then that the moment had come to dissolve the Chamber ; on the one hand, he satisfied the lively desire of the Fascisti, Nationalists, Agrarians and Industrials, on the other, he counted on reducing the number of Socialist and Popular Deputies, and finally he hoped to succeed in persuading the moderate Socialists to collaborate with him.

But the expectations of the Old Man of Dronero were not fulfilled : the Fascisti, who had come into the Chamber by the merits and will of Giolitti, at once took up a position against him, with the Nationalists, on the question of the Treaty of Rapallo ; the Popolari came back increased from ninety-nine to one hundred and seven, already in open opposition to Giolitti's electoral methods of violence and intimidation ; and finally the Socialists, though they had lost twenty seats, came back firm in their uncompromising resolve of no collaboration. In this election Mussolini was elected Deputy ; in his maiden speech in the Chamber he presaged a coalition of the parties with a mass following, Fascisti, Popolari and Socialists, while at the same time he declared himself Philo-Nationalist and Philo-Catholic. He thus cast his nets for the future, yet uncertain whether his destiny would take him to the Left or to the Right.

§ 19. *Bonomi—the 'Veto on Giolitti',—the Facta Crisis*

After the fall of Giolitti—the constant fate of Ministers who dissolve Parliament—the office of Prime Minister

fell to Ivanoe Bonomi, a Reformist-Socialist who, during and after the war, had been Minister of Public Works and of War, a man experienced in administration but by temperament uncertain and vacillating in politics. He made, however, certain attempts to dam the movement of the Fascist Irregulars and to repress that of the Communists, but showed himself weak with both. Moreover Bonomi lacked the co-operation of the middle classes and of the higher grades of the bureaucracy, civil and military, which protected Fascism because it was useful to the agrarian and industrial reaction, and also because it was surrounded by a certain aura of patriotism, made up of rhetoric and brag, of enthusiasm and intimidation, which was pleasing to many. The action of the Government, which had to take into account the philo-Fascist state of mind even of the Democratic Liberal currents among the public, was fragmentary and ineffectual, and the Fascisti used it as a handle to seek a firmer and vaster organization, drawing ever nearer to the Conservative currents.

To torment the existence of the Bonomi Ministry came the fight of the State employees for higher salaries, but a far greater source of disturbance was the collapse of the *Banca Italiana di Sconto*, which had four milliards of deposits, and was obliged to refuse payment. The intervention of the Government was called for, but the Cabinet did not wish to assume this responsibility; all it did was to ward off bankruptcy by applying a moratorium and facilitating the liquidation of the company. The *Banca Roma*, too, was in danger of falling; the *Banca d'Italia* gave first aid, and succeeding Ministries did the rest. The effects of the crisis on the national economy were considerable, and the middle classes and business men blamed the Government as incapable and inept. While matters stood thus, and were further aggravated by the conduct of the extreme parties of the Right and Left, the Parliamentary Group behind Giolitti which formed part of the Government majority, decided on the eve of the re-opening of the

Chamber to withdraw its support from the Ministry. Bonomi was thus obliged to resign. It was said that this move was not entirely unaffected by a certain foreign influence, uneasy as to the course of the Genoa Conference, seemingly because of Bonomi's favourable attitude at Cannes towards the proposals of Mr. Lloyd George and M. Briand. But the public pretext for the secession was laid to the account of the Popular Party, and the fact that the latter had obliged the Government at last to face the problem of the liberty of the schools, concerning which a bill drawn up by the Minister Corbino was shortly to be discussed. It is certain that this was only a pretext, because the problem urged by the Popolari was no new one; the thesis had already been accepted by Giolitti, who had presented to the Chamber the bill drawn up by the Minister Benedetto Croce, and it had formed the subject of understandings in the parliamentary coalition for the Bonomi Cabinet. The substance of this dispute came from an old anti-clerical prejudice in favour of a State monopoly of education revived to mask the manœuvre against the rise of the Popular Party, which in Parliament not seldom found itself with the casting vote. But the Giolittians made this move in order mainly to reinstate their chief as Prime Minister. The Popolari declared that they could not collaborate in a Giolitti Cabinet. This answer was taken as a challenge, and to the present writer was attributed the greatest share of the responsibility for what was called '*The veto on Giolitti*'. It was in this form that the event passed into history. The present writer never made a mystery of his aversion to Giolittian policy, nor of his opinion constantly adverse to any collaboration with Giolitti. But it was a gross inaccuracy for controversial purposes to attribute to his opinion the force of a *veto*, and thus to raise the delicate question whether the constitutional life of a State could tolerate the power of a man outside Parliament who was supposed to hold a hundred deputies in his obedience. The truth was far otherwise.

The Popular Deputies enjoyed, and enjoy, complete independence as a Parliamentary Group ; they were, and are, responsible to themselves for their parliamentary activities ; the instructions given by the National Council of the Party or by its leader are purely advisory, and concern general lines of policy ; they never form an imperative mandate. To such an extent was this true that the Popular Group acted against the views of the present writer when it agreed to collaborate with Giolitti in June, 1920, and with Facta in February, 1922. But, though the constitutional question raised by its adversaries had no foundation, it impressed public opinion and intensified the hostility towards the Popolari. The result was that when, Giolitti having been ruled out, the candidature of Facta was put forward for the Premiership, the Popular Deputies were not able to resist, and yielded. They thus assumed the ultimate responsibility for the situation, for Facta was a weak man, unequal to his task, incapable of governing ; it was believed that he was Giolitti's lieutenant, and he himself felt that he was ; actually, however, he was the prisoner of the Right, that is, of the Conservatives, Nationalists and Fascists, now for all practical purposes united.

The Genoa Conference was a political parenthesis. Then a certain truce between the parties was reached, and even the seamen, who were threatening a strike, suspended their activity ; the Government, in order to maintain a period of calm, sought to hold in check the more turbulent by promises and concessions which enfeebled them. The Conference was not yet closed when the Fascist Irregulars resumed their activities by armed raids on the Socialists and on the Popular and Catholic Clubs, round about Arezzo (May, 1922). After that came the armed occupations of villages and towns, of which that of Bologna is a typical instance ; it was carried out as a protest against the Prefect, who by a decree had sought to regulate agricultural labour during the harvest (June, 1922). This and other occupations of towns such as Treviso, Rovigo and

Novara, the mutual reprisals between Fascisti and Communists, the factious agitations that spread everywhere, neither impeded nor repressed, shook the Facta Ministry, and a vote of No Confidence was passed by the parliamentary majority, with the exception of Giolitti's Liberal-Democrats, the Conservative Right and the Nationalists. The Fascisti abstained from voting, invoking Revolution.

This was the moment in which the Socialists should have assumed the responsibility of collaborating with the other democratic parties. They not only had the offer, but Turati himself asked for and obtained an audience with the King. It was believed that this was a definite step ; instead the Socialists were afraid of their revolutionary sections which were enraged against the Fascisti, and ended by refusing to collaborate. Giolitti's Democratic-Liberals, on the other hand, brought to nothing the attempt to form a Ministry of All the Talents under the Presidency of Orlando or De Nicola, and once more insisted on putting forward the name of Facta just at the moment when the Socialist and Communist Trade Unions, united in a secret directory, and, it is said, instigated by *agents provocateurs*, procured a general protest strike in the public services. This was a propitious occasion for the Fascisti ; they had remained outside the parliamentary wrangles, leaning towards illegal action on a larger scale ; they now had an immediate opportunity to let loose their armed Irregulars on the strikers. In this, they received help from the police and the citizens who were tired of being held to ransom by general strikes in the public services. The proletarian organizations in those days proved their inferiority in face of the armed bands and thus the futility of their efforts ; and the middle classes, which felt themselves upheld, gave the Fascisti arms, money, and moral and political support. This episode, which in certain towns led to tragic flares of civil war, put Facta back in the saddle, more than ever the prisoner of the Fascisti.

§ 20. *Anti-Popularism and the Fear of Bolshevism*

It has been thought well to treat in some detail the events of that time, in order to be able to show with greater completeness the elements of the crisis leading up to the 'March on Rome'.

What springs to the eye is that here was a psychological phenomenon which can only be likened to the indefinable cases of mass-suggestion, such as the unreasoning panic that sometimes seizes crowds. Of similar cases of suggestion every army had tragic examples during the war. In Italy there was Caporetto : the soldiers fled in panic, and no one ever knew the reason. This happened also in 1922 ; Italy became a prey to suggestion, to unreasoning fear and unreasoning hope—the fear of Bolshevism, when Bolshevism had been overcome two years before after the occupation of the factories ; the hope that the energetic and intimidating action of the Fascist Irregulars would prove the one means of saving middle class economy and the constitutional State from the advance of Socialists and Popolari. This state of mind, excited by the general strike and by the parliamentary crisis in which industrial and agrarian capitalism had caught a glimpse of the peril of Socialist collaboration in the Government, kept the country in a state of agitation and under the incubus of inevitable coming events. The Fascisti, therefore, became in an increased degree the objects of Liberal approval and Government tolerance, while they continued the occupation of town halls and towns and onslaughts on Trade Unions and workers' co-operatives. The middle classes did not see the peril nor the illegality of the method of violence ; they saw only the strengthening of their own side, which they confounded with the State. In point of fact, the State was losing authority and consistency, while the Government of the State was yielding up its powers to armed revolt. Between a Parliament that had failed to

solve a Cabinet crisis and a Fascist mob that held the opposing parties at bay, the Government was for the mob. This phenomenon is connected with that which we studied in the last chapter, and which appeared for the first time in the 'Radiant Days of May', under the Salandra Government ; it is one of the signs of the creeping paralysis of the political class. The market-place dominates an impotent Parliament, and the Government yields to the market-place since it no longer has confidence in Parliament. Thus the Facta Government was forced by the Fascist occupation to dissolve the Communal Council of Milan ; and the Facta Government was obliged likewise by the Fascist occupation to abolish the Commissariats of the Redeemed Territories. These events, and others of daily occurrence, which kept the country in a state of agitation between September and October 1922, gave rise to a Press campaign headed by the *Corriere della Sera*, demanding the resignations of the Ministry and the composition of another of a conciliatory character, including the Fascisti, in order that illegal action should give way to legal and the Fascisti assume the direct responsibilities of power. From that day forth, public opinion considered the Facta Ministry, devoid as it was of all moral force, as good as fallen. The crisis was inherent in the situation.

The attitude of the Socialists was very reserved, both because they were still suffering from the failure of the general strike, and because they were already working up for a new split, between the Reformists, known as Unitarians, and the Revolutionaries, or Maximalists.

The Popolari likewise remained aloof from the crisis for which they did not wish to incur any responsibility but which they foresaw to be inevitable. In that period, the conservative Catholic element, represented by a few Senators, attempted a manifestation against the attitude of the Parliamentary Popular Group, sending an open letter to the Political Secretary. The National Council of the Popular Party intervened with an appeal to the country

which remains one of the strongest documents of that most difficult time, issued on the very eve of the March on Rome, and summarizing the position taken up and the measures believed necessary for the redemption of Italian political life.

The alarm sounded in the Appeal, which had considerable diffusion in the Press, was heard by those who concerned themselves with the precipitation of events, but those who directed Italian politics, and especially those who saw in politics the more or less lawful protection of their own interests, turned a deaf ear. The last, grouped in Industrial or Agrarian Federations had become exceedingly hostile towards the Popolari. The reason lay with the economic policy of the Popular Party. In the agrarian field it had sustained long and arduous battles during its three years of existence to make Parliament approve a bill for dividing-up and colonizing the Latifundia, establishing agricultural wages boards, recognizing agricultural collective agreements, and providing for the safe-guarding and development of small holdings; it had also supported the agitations of the Agricultural Leagues for better economic conditions. In the industrial field, the Popular Party had fought the ultra-protectionist tariff of June, 1921, the exaggerated provisions in favour of the mercantile marine, and the monetary inflation, while it had supported the supplementary tax and the tax on capital. These were obvious reasons why it should have lost the confidence of the representatives of capitalism who were terrified lest a parliamentary understanding between Popolari and Socialists should give the country into the hands of the two strongest parties with a policy—from their point of view—economically harmful and politically dangerous. As a matter of fact the peril of such an understanding between Socialists and Popolari never existed save for polemical purposes, since Socialists refused, as we have seen, to collaborate with anyone, and since, from the standpoint of economics, the views of Popolari and Socialists were very divergent and in

certain matters contradictory ; but, above all, because the Socialists would not give up their revolutionary leanings.

But here was a useful means of exciting the country, and the Press organs, in good faith or prompted by the industrials and agrarians, were insistent in the campaign. And since the rise of the Popolari and their fortunes coincided with the introduction of Proportional Representation, which they warmly upheld, there was a vigorous revival of the anti-proportionalist campaign, in the hope that the fall of P.R. would mark also the setting of the star of Populism. Hatred of Proportionalism reached the pitch of accusing the innocent electoral system of all the vacillations and faults of Parliament, and of holding it responsible for the instability of the various Governments. All the Liberal organs of both Right and Left made war on P.R. for reasons further-reaching than even their aversion for the Popolari. P.R. had served to organize the electorate, to give it a party consciousness and personality, and to free it from local and oligarchic coteries, while it had contributed effectively to overcoming the chaotic forms of an undisciplined universal suffrage. All this meant giving a different turn to the exercise of the sovereignty of the people. Here was the source of friction, between the old oligarchic currents and the new wave of democratic life. The latter was therefore labelled demagoguery, or even, with the Russian term, Bolshevism, and much was written against the Red Bolshevism of the Socialists and the White Bolshevism of the Popolari, and against their possible union.

Therefore both Democratic-Liberals and Industrialists and Agrarians turned to Fascism as the only force that could save them. Thus was invented the fable that Fascism in 1922 saved Italy from Bolshevism. There was no peril of Bolshevism in Italy nor did Fascism save her from it. If by Bolshevism is meant the agitations and disorders of 1919-20, up till the occupation of the factories, these were already past history, and the General Elections

of May, 1921, were evidence of the state of mind of the country and of its constitutional normality.

There does not exist in Italian political life a more insincere phenomenon than the fear of Bolshevism on the part of the wealthy classes in 1922 ; the latter had taken the offensive against the State by the Fascist acts of violence, and had to justify both offensive and violence : this they could only do by crying out that there was peril of a Bolshevization of Italy in the near future.

Though hard-pressed by this current of hostility, the Popolari stood firm, without yielding a point of their programme. They saw unmoved certain nuclei of their own followers break off and go from them, the Conservative current among Catholics run towards Fascism, and certain sympathies in ecclesiastical circles grow cooler. All this served to give a stronger individuality to the party, accentuating its democratic character, its political independence, and preparing it for its stand against Fascism.

Thus the three revisionist parties which attacked the position of the political class, namely Socialism, Popularism and Fascism, had each in its own manner raised a grave problem in public life—the problem of a new ruling class, which involved that of the revision, institutional and constitutional, moral, political and economic, of the State.

We shall see in the second part of this work how this problem resolved itself, and what was the further trend of events.

PART II

CHAPTER V

'THE MARCH ON ROME'

§ 21. *The Coup de Main*

IN a modern State it would seem inconceivable that a political party should form bands of armed Irregulars and move towards the Capital with the intention of capturing the governing power despite the prospect of having to fight against the regular army, and that this should be done in the name of patriotism. Mob riots and popular revolutions there have been; Spain has had experience of military '*pronunciamientos*', but constitutional history does not record any event similar to that which occurred in Italy in October, 1922. If we had not shown in the first part of this book the remote causes and immediate premises of the rise of Fascism, it would appear absolutely inexplicable.

The position of the Facta Cabinet was not only insecure but had become untenable, and the Prime Minister was only awaiting the reopening of the Chamber to tender his resignation—at least, so rumour said. As Facta's successor there was talk of Giolitti and Salandra; the Liberal Democrats agitated for Giolitti, the Liberals of the Right and the Nationalists for Salandra. Both parties recognized that it would not be possible to form a new Cabinet without including the Fascisti, who dominated the forums and market-places from Perugia to Upper Italy. Facta secretly worked for the return of Giolitti, but his efforts bore no fruit. Signor Lusignoli, a Senator and, at that

time, Prefect of Milan, maintained clandestine relations both with Giolitti and Mussolini, striving to bring about an understanding between them. Certain Fascisti in Rome led another ex-Prime Minister, Orlando, to believe that Mussolini was disposed to favour him—news not displeasing to Orlando, who would have welcomed the chance to retrieve what his uncertainty had lost him in July. Salandra, supported by the Nationalists, was much surer of returning as head of the Government.

These three ex-Premiers shared at that moment the state of mind of those who, while they judged the violent acts of the Fascisti to be excessive and disturbing, thought it would be wise to bring the Fascisti, and above all, Mussolini, into the Government, and to clip their wings by making them share in the responsibilities of power. All of which meant that they still believed themselves to be the rulers and representatives of a political class alive and master of itself, and showed clearly that they had understood neither the spirit of Fascism nor the inevitable psychological and moral effects of two years' unbridled lawlessness on the part of an armed faction.

I remember that, in those days, a certain politician asked me if the Popolari, in the event of Giolitti's returning to power, would again make stipulations and bring up the so-called *veto*.

'Is Giolitti disposed to form his Cabinet with the Fascisti?' I asked him.

'Yes', said he.

'And without the Fascisti?'

'I think it very unlikely.'

'And against the Fascisti?'

'Oh no! That is impossible!' was his answer.

'Then', I concluded, 'Giolitti will not form the Ministry, and thus it is useless for me to say what would be the attitude of the Popolari towards him.'

It must be noted that the Fascisti had then only thirty-five Deputies in the Chamber, and that the whole of the

Right, including Nationalists and Fascisti, barely numbered seventy out of five hundred and thirty-five. But the Fascisti, by the extra-legal position they had assumed, dominated the situation, so that Liberals and Democrats were no longer sure of themselves.

A very serious obstacle to the participation of the Fascisti in the government was Mussolini's declaration concerning the *Republican tendencies* of the movement; it was feared that there would be conflict between these new forces and the Monarchy, and there were even wild rumours that a new claimant to the throne, a surer exponent of Nationalist aims, might be put forward.

But, as Mussolini perceived that his position was growing stronger and that it would be quite possible for him to attempt a *coup de main*, he himself wished to remove this obstacle; so he cast away all his Republican leanings, changed his language, and let it be understood that he was disposed to support Monarchy and Monarch if he found no hindrance in that quarter. This new attitude was greeted with approbation and pæans of praise—not that all believed in this sudden conversion, but because it meant that support of Fascism was not incompatible with loyalty to the King.

Meanwhile people continued to discuss the name of the next Premier. Giolitti? Salandra? Orlando? No one, save Mussolini himself, thought of Mussolini as a possible Premier, least of all the Nationalists. When he saw the success of the Fascist Congress and the rally of his legions at Naples, on 24 October, with the ready consent of the Government and amid the applause of Conservatives and Liberals, he left the ingenuous congressists to their discussion and hastened to Milan to gather up the threads for his *coup*. All felt the gravity of the hour and the menace of so large a body of armed Irregulars—all except the head of the Government, Facta, who declared himself satisfied that no regrettable incident had occurred at Naples to disturb the peace.

But on 26 October Facta was challenged by certain Fascisti to hand in his resignation at once ; and, that very evening, in an emergency Cabinet meeting, summoned in the hope of finding a middle course that would save appearances, all the Ministers decided to place their portfolios at the Premier's disposal. But on 27 October the Fascisti, in the name of their leader, declared themselves still unsatisfied, and, with threats of risings, insisted that Facta should agree to their demand, whereupon that excellent man that very evening tendered to the King the resignations of the entire Cabinet.

And that very night of 27-28 October, which saw the opening of the Ministerial crisis, saw the beginning of the Fascist revolt and the mobilization of the armed Irregulars, the attempts to occupy the Prefectures of Upper Italy, and the organization of the March on Rome. The Ministry of the Interior was in an uproar ; an hour before dawn the Cabinet met and resolved upon resistance and the proclamation of martial law throughout the Kingdom. The decision was brought to the King, and telegraphed to the Prefects with orders to put it into force at noon (28 October). A proclamation to all citizens was printed. It bore the names of all the Ministers, and denounced the Fascist rebellion.

I was asked by an authoritative person if the Popolari would support the proclamation of Martial Law. My answer was that such a measure could not originate with a Ministry which had already resigned ; that the Ministry should either withdraw its resignation or be immediately replaced by another, and that most certainly the Popolari would take a stand for constitutional order and against armed revolt.

Meanwhile Facta, always vacillating, not only did not withdraw the resignations of his Cabinet but, while he was deciding that martial law should be enforced at noon, still hoped to be able to negotiate with the rebels—to such an extent had he grown accustomed to consider his office as a

continual and ineffectual mediation between lawful power and lawless faction.

At the same time various persons gave the King to understand that a fight between the Army and the Fascisti would be a most serious matter of which the consequences could not be foreseen ; while, on the other hand, it would be possible to resume negotiations for a Salandra Cabinet in which the Fascisti should be well represented. The fear that worse might befall, the hope of a possible understanding, the weak and ambiguous position of the Cabinet which, having already resigned, found itself without authority, and the advice of certain Army chiefs decided the King to refuse his signature to the decree proclaiming Martial Law and to invite Salandra to take office.

Mussolini, who saw that his *coup* had succeeded beyond the wildest hopes either of himself or his followers, understood that his hour had struck, thanks to the position of inferiority in which all the lawful representatives of the country had placed themselves by their own action. Through his friends in Rome he made it known that he could not join a Salandra Ministry or any other ; that power must be given to himself ; that, unless it were conferred on him then and there, at Milan, and unless his armed followers were allowed to make a peaceful entry into the Capital in symbol of victory, he would not stay his march on Rome. All was granted, by the King, and by the Facta Government which looked on passively. The 31st October saw the triumphal entry into Rome of about thirty thousand Black Shirts, amid the applause of their friends and the pensive dismay of the greater number of citizens.

Mussolini immediately turned his attention to forming his Cabinet, more as an army chief choosing his Staff than as the head of a government nominating his colleagues. Having refused to treat with Parties so as not to tie himself in any way, he dealt only with individual politicians, many of whom were alien to the Fascist Party. He needed men experienced in public affairs, for both he and his followers

were new to government and without administrative experience.

The non-Fascists whom he asked to join the Cabinet had to face a serious problem of conscience. If they decided to work with him, they would be taking responsibility for tendencies not their own nor in harmony with their convictions. If they refused, they ran the risk of inciting the man, who believed himself a victor, to return to a system of violence. Public opinion was divided. The fact that the King had commissioned Mussolini to form the Ministry, after a ministerial crisis previous to the march on Rome, lent to its formation an appearance of constitutionality, and might be construed as an attempt to bring a faction back to lawful methods. In these circumstances, a coalition ministry might seem an attempt at pacification, and, from this point of view, the collaboration of constitutionalists might counter-balance the triumph of the armed faction. Such, at least, was the opinion of the philo-Fascisti, of those who sought conciliation at all costs, and even of not a few anti-Fascisti. Others, on the contrary, thought that the state of mind of a faction triumphant in its seizure of the Capital of the Kingdom must have consequences beyond all measure, that the event in itself was a blow at the heart of the parliamentary *régime*, and that there was therefore no bridging the gulf between Fascisti and constitutionalists. Among those of this opinion was the present writer, who opposed any understandings with the new Government. However, among the Popolari, as among the Liberals and Social-Democrats, the opinion prevailed that they had better collaborate with Mussolini, in the hope that, having once attained power, albeit by methods of revolt, he and his friends would tread the path of law and order and respect for liberty, and in the belief that their presence would preserve continuity in the constitutional life of the Kingdom.

Thus constituted, the first Mussolini Cabinet faced the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate on 15 November.

§ 22. *The First Steps towards Dictatorship*

At this point it will be well to give a sketch of this man who holds so large a place in Italian politics and even in foreign public opinion.

Of mediocre culture and meagre political experience, Mussolini has the brilliant qualities of the extemporizer and none of the scruples of those who, convinced of an idea, fear to be false to it. He has passed from extreme revolutionary Socialism and gross irreligion to the most pronounced conservatism and clericalism. He was an anti-militarist, opposed to colonial enterprise, denying the duty of defending his country—and he became an interventionist with imperialist tendencies. His drastic Fascist *Programme* of 1919, his personal work as a subversive demagogue, were transmuted into yet harsher experiments in reaction. His mind, given to excessive simplification, is bound by no formula; he can pass from theory to theory, from position to position, rapidly, even inconsistently, with neither remorse nor regret. In this game he has one constant aim—to lay hold of the elements of imagination and sentiment that make for success. Hence his speeches are always attuned to the state of mind of the public to which he is speaking: if the public were other, he would use other language.

Another quality which he possesses is his constant ability to seize the moment, to profit by circumstances, to hold in check the most experienced and shrewdest men, to come out of a tight corner with ease and elegance. The fact of his having for a long time been free, both as Socialist and Fascist, to wield with impunity every kind of threat and violence, has given him a profound contempt for the politicians of the past, whether Socialists or Liberals, who tolerated or flattered him.

His friends and companions he holds in esteem so long as they are useful to him; he fears them when he cannot do without them; he abandons them to their fate when

they are in his way. For a long time it was believed, by many who were benevolently disposed towards Mussolini, that once in power he would tame the extremists of Fascism. In fact, it seemed that 'Il Duce'—as his followers call him—for a long time vacillated between law and violence, between normality and reaction. But he chose his own road. The distinction between Mussolini and the Fascisti was repudiated the day he proclaimed to the Chamber, in January, 1925, that he took on himself the responsibility of all that had been done in the name of Fascism.

Was it fear or courage? None can tell. At that hour, which saw the further development of his system, he was sure that none could call him to account.

With the same theatrical pose, and with an assurance derived from possession of power and the presence of the armed Irregulars, he faced the Chamber of Deputies for the first time on 15 November, 1922, in the rôle of a lion-tamer, declaring that *of that grey, gloomy House he could have made the bivouac of his Black Shirts*, and that it remained for it to decide *whether it would live two days or two years*. The whole object of his first government speech was to appear as a man who had carried out a Revolution—and yet that Revolution had never been—as a man who had won a victory over enemies—yet they were not enemies but fellow-citizens, many of whom had been his collaborators, the more effectual the more unwitting.

In face of this phenomenon, with all its contradictions and audacities, a great part of the capitalistic middle-classes, conservative Liberals and landed Clericals found themselves bound by their own action to assist what was then called 'The Mussolini Experiment'. It was their own creation which, grown suddenly larger and stronger than they had imagined, had turned the tables on them, and they, the philo-Fascisti, now followed the triumphal car and, albeit with fear in their hearts for the unknown future, flung flowers and sang hymns of joy. They believed, yes, they verily believed, that Socialism, Popularism, and Parlia-

mentary democracy were gone for ever ; in their scales, the gain outweighed the loss.

On the famous day of 15 November, 1922, the four hundred non-Fascist Deputies, thus outraged, made not a movement, not a gesture ; they yielded, and passed a vote of confidence in Mussolini. Only the representatives of the Socialists and Popolari made reservations and comments on the manner in which power had been seized, and, in a minor key, re-affirmed the rights of Parliament. But the Popolari, already bound to the Government by the fact that two Ministers were drawn from their ranks, had to vote in its favour, and only the Socialists voted against. Those, however, on whom it devolved, either legally—as in the case of Signor De Nicola, the Speaker—or morally—as in the case of old Parliamentary leaders like Giolitti, Orlando and Salandra—to defend the honour of the Chamber and its statutory rights, remained silent, as though stricken dumb by such audacity, certainly without feeling in themselves strength for a higher duty than the care of their own persons. Maybe they were blind, and did not see that in that moment something crumbled away under their very eyes.

The Chamber thus assured itself a year and a half of life, till the General Elections of April, 1924 ; but it marked out for itself the road to surrender. Without hesitation it gave the new Government plenary powers for the reform of the Administration, Finance and the Codes, nor could it longer exercise control over the policy of the Executive power, which, now with tentative prudence, now with audacious strokes, in deed as well as word, initiated the dictatorship.

§ 23. *Violence and the Fascist State*

Mussolini wished to seize for himself all the powers of the State and to pose as Dictator, and both Senate and Chamber yielded up to him the legislature. But the

pressing problem from the first hour of the new *régime*—which began, in fatuous imitation of the French Revolution, to count the First Year of the New Era—was that of individual and collective violence. This problem has remained till to-day the Nessus Shirt of Fascism.

With the 'March on Rome' and its happy ending, every Fascist leader great or small felt in his heart the desire to become real and effective chief of his town or province, and to carry out a little 'march' of his own. The result was the occupation of Town Halls and other public institutions, and conflicts and collisions with the population. Mussolini ordered that an end should be put to the occupying of Town Halls and the deposing of Municipal Councils, but after a short interval these were renewed, because the local situations had been aggravated by continual conflict.

Mussolini, at the cross-roads between legality and violence, thought it opportune towards the end of December to close the accounts of the period of Fascist Direct Action by an ample amnesty. This, however, not only at once assumed a partisan character, being granted to Fascisti and denied to other citizens who had committed similar offences, but it sought to sanctify law-breaking as an act of political virtue by its definition of 'offences for national ends'. The principle that the end justifies the means—that is, an immoral principle—was thus hallowed in an amnesty.

Yet, precisely because of the enunciation of this principle which reflected the state of mind of the victorious party, the amnesty failed to close the period of violence, and only raised it to another plane by defining violent acts as lawful and useful to the nation. If this were so, why should they cease? Had every difficulty vanished with the seizure of power? The announcement of the amnesty had been published, though the Decree itself was not actually issued, when terrible events occurred in Turin. In the night of 17 December, 1922, the Fascisti murdered twenty-two workmen (the admitted total), who were believed to be Communists. Most of them were in their homes, among

their wives and children ; some of the bodies were thrown into the Po. The Turin Fascisti earned a telegram of congratulation from Signor De Vecchi, Under-Secretary of State in Mussolini's Cabinet, and the judges applied the amnesty to the murderers, declaring that this slaughter had been perpetrated for ' national ends'.

What had seemed, from the colour of its members, to be a Coalition Government, showed itself little by little to be the personal government of Mussolini. He played two distinct parts—that of Dictator and Head of the Government, and that of leader of his Party. Government and Party expressed themselves in his person. In those early days he found himself in the fortunate position of one who can choose his own road ; had he chosen that of law and order—that is to say, if he had made his party take its place, on an equal footing with other parties within the orbit of constitutional and moral law—the approbations, spontaneous or forced, which had followed him till then, would have been redoubled. The philo-fascisti and the Liberals of the Right were convinced that he would do so. They judged the outbreaks of lawlessness as transitory effects of a revolutionary commotion soon to die down—like the ground-swell following the storm, till the sea is once more calm and the sky cloudless. Idyllic and unreal vision which events soon proved to be wholly error ! A man of other temper than Mussolini would have been needed to make it true, a mind surer of itself and more apt to dominate than to be dominated by the crowd. He chose the other road, that which had brought him to power, and elected to remain Head of the State by the strength of his armed Irregulars, by the centralizing of the powers of Government, by the full triumph of his faction.

To do this he needed, above all, to break up the Parties—no hard task in several cases. The Nationalist Party found in Fascism the mass formation it had never been able to acquire, while triumphant Fascism found in Nationalism the reactionary political theory that it lacked. Thus it was

easy for them to come to an understanding which afterwards became fusion ; the new Party that resulted was known as National-Fascism. The other Parties were undermined by means of internal dissensions and by a facile using-up of those who drew near to the new rising star. The Socialists and Popolari were subjected to violent attacks, and the better to disintegrate the workers' organizations behind them, Mussolini formed the Corporations, or Fascist Trade Unions. Into these agricultural and industrial workers were drawn by bribes and threats, while the Labour Exchanges, already a Fascist monopoly, made no scruple of boycotting those who had not a Corporation membership card. The Liberal and Democratic Parties, save the little group round Amendola, had all come within the orbit of Fascismo, and lacked any real consistency.

Another means of assuring power was to place the armed forces on a firm basis. Mussolini made the Cabinet sanction the disbandment of the Guardia Regia—the police force for the maintenance of public order—and the transformation of the Fascist Irregulars into a voluntary Militia under his own orders for the defence of the new *régime*. Incorrigible optimists saw in this step the beginning of a return to order and did not perceive that, under a cloak of legality, a party militia was being maintained and equipped at the public expense for the purpose of assuring Fascist pre-eminence and dominion in the State. The militia had charge of public order and a special right of vigilance in railways and ports. It had its own hierarchy ; and many of its officers who, in the Army, had barely the rank and pay of Captains or Lieutenants, received in the new corps the stripes, pay and style of Generals.

To the same end—that of assuring power—all Government and Municipal employees were subjected to the will of the Fascist chiefs. In the provinces this was easier, both because the new Prefects were chosen from among the Fascist leaders, or were men whom the latter could consider absolutely safe, and because the local Fascist organiza-

tions were a law to themselves and treated officials as their subordinates. In the Capital, the bureaucratic routine continued more or less to function, but efforts to disintegrate it were not wanting. They took the form of the appointment of new men, without experience but domineering, of the elimination of those disliked or distrusted by the authorities, and finally, of the abolition of legal guarantees of officials' security of tenure.

Yet another step towards the permeation of public and economic life was the infiltration of the chief exponents of Fascism into the Banks, commercial and industrial associations, and undertakings associated with the State, so that every form of collective activity came to be controlled in the interests of the new *régime*. Resistance was met by threats, or by other and even more convincing methods.

Nor was this enough ! By a Decree of which it is impossible to ignore the gravity, the Prefects were empowered to dissolve the Executive Councils of the Workers' Leagues and Societies administering social funds, and even to confiscate these funds and turn them to other uses. The Government arrogated to itself the right to dissolve the directorates of private societies and Trade Unions and to replace them by Royal Commissioners. They even went so far as to proclaim the right to dissolve any workers' association or Trade Union.

The pressure of State centralization and of a party monopoly combined to undermine all public bodies, so as to create a general situation favourable to the dominion of the Fascist minority which, after having captured the Government, by the successful *coup* of October, strove to capture the country.

This tendency was called *totalitaria*. The theory is that Fascism, now National Fascism, is everything, the rest of the country nothing. The former has all the rights derived from power and strength, the latter only the obligations of obedience ; the former is the Nation, the latter the Anti-

Nation ; the former is *la Patria*, the latter *l'Anti-Patria*. This is not a personal interpretation, it is the formula laid down and defended in political speeches, newspaper and review articles, pamphlets and books, by Fascist writers and the philosophers of the new gospel. The chief theorist of Fascism has been Professor Giovanni Gentile, known for his Actualist philosophy. He has maintained the thesis that the State is an ethical reality, that the State is identified with the Government, and that therefore the actual Government is in itself force, law, morals—an All. He has appropriated Spaventa's words : 'Are you a worshipper of the State ? Yes, I am a worshipper of the State !' Thus he defends a new divinity in the Fascist State.

One of the most solemn affirmations of Mussolini and all Fascist writers is precisely this : the will to create the 'Fascist State'. The expression is equivalent to that of the 'totalitarian tendency' : Fascism is the All. The practical realization of this *Fascist State* lies in the progressive establishment of the *Fascist dictatorship*. The legal principle on which these new theories rest is that of the *Rights of Revolution*. The Fascisti maintain that the March on Rome was a Revolution, creating for the victors rights of dominion transcending those of ordinary citizens in their institutions, written law, and moral law. Framed in this conception, the amnesty for offences 'for national ends' appears logical—save that it goes beyond the moral law ; private violence is justified—save that it violates the principles of social life ; State interference is necessary—save only that it destroys personal individuality.

Mussolini proclaims that he strides across the body of the Goddess Liberty, but for controversial purposes he confounds Liberty with licence. He claims to govern by *force and consent*, but he only believes in *forced consent*. He affirms that he has with him all Italians, but he deprives Italians of the means freely to manifest their opinions.

All this aroused ill-concealed uneasiness in the ranks of the Liberals, who could not accept the proclamation of the

Fascist State and began again to invoke the principles of the Liberal State. But it was late for Mussolini to yield an inch. He made a show of not desiring to push his policy to its logical extreme, while at the same time he incited the extremists of his party to clamour for another revolutionary outbreak, for a '*second wave*',—a characteristic expression to indicate what came to be known as the '*Fascistization of the country*'.

§ 24. *The Secession of the Popolari*

The moral and political discomfort of the Popolari during the period of their collaboration in Mussolini's Cabinet was extreme ; and, despite the hopes of certain members of the Parliamentary Group that the Government would end by returning to normality, the majority of the Popolari became convinced that every attempt at honest collaboration must end in failure. Every approach made to Mussolini to obtain the cessation of local violence came to nothing, and every reservation with regard to governmental measures that conflicted with the criteria and aims of the Popular Party was ill received. In spite of Popular collaboration in the Cabinet, there were continual assaults on individual Popolari and on Catholic clubs where the Popular element was strong. Moreover the Fascist leaders, acting on a hint from the Government, redoubled their efforts to split the party in two. As we have seen, the right wing, without yet abandoning the Party, drew further away from it in spirit and discipline, and in this it was visibly favoured by the Fascisti. It was at this moment that the Executive decided to call the Fourth Congress of the Popular Party, which, notwithstanding the machinations of the philo-Fascisti and the Cabinet, was held at Turin in April, 1923. This Congress marked the first step in the open secession of the constitutional parties from the Fascist Government. The Popular Party was the first to raise its voice boldly and openly in defence of

liberty. Despite attempts to break it up, deform its character, and turn it aside from its programme, it re-affirmed its right to exist and its faith in the ideals of Christian Democracy.

After a political speech made by the present writer as chief of the party (a speech that Mussolini's official organ sensationally denounced as 'The Speech of an Enemy'), the Congress summed up the situation in a resolution which may be considered a statement of the Popular ideal as opposed to the ideal of Fascism. Its principal points were : 'The Italian Popular Party *confirms* once more and with renewed faith, even after the recent political events [the March on Rome], the Christian-democratic character, the spirit, the substance and the points of its programme ; its independence of organization, its specific reason for existence and its high aims, ethical, political and economic ; —it *re-affirms* its will to continue the fundamental battle for *Liberty* and against any centralizing perversion in the name of the pantheistic State or deified nation ; it asserts its solidarity with those who suffer for the Idea and for internal peace, and *invokes* for the welfare of Italy respect of human personality and the spirit of Christian brotherhood.'

After this act the Fascisti, who had a boundless conception of their dominion and the profound conviction that force sufficed to constrain everyone else to follow them, found no solution but rupture. Mussolini put before the Popular Ministers and Under-Secretaries the *aut aut* : either to repudiate the Congress of the Party or to leave the Cabinet. Thus the secession came about ; the illusion that Popolari and Fascisti might come to an understanding on a basis of law and peace proved vain. But from that moment the Popolari had ransomed for themselves and for the other constitutional parties the right to defend the principles of liberty and morality in public life, to uphold in conflict with Fascism their own ideals and their own past and to take up a consistent political position. The Popular Party was the first. During the next eighteen months, from April 1923,

to November 1924, all the other political parties collaborating with or 'flanking' the Fascisti took the same course. They too had proved the impossibility of true and real collaboration with the Government. Indeed, collaboration can be real only if parties are on an equal footing, united round a common programme. Fascism denied any moral equality and ruled out any convergence of programmes. All attempts at collaboration were bound to fail, and the first, which failed through intrinsic and fundamental incompatibility, was that of the Popolari. The phrase of the Turin Congress which went the round of the political world was : 'One collaborates standing, not on one's knees'. Mussolini's idea was rather different.

There was yet another motive for a redoubled Fascist offensive against the Popolari. Mussolini's objectives were two : to break up the unity of the Popular Party, and to draw the Church towards the new *régime*, binding her up with its destinies. These two aims could not succeed ; what was more important, however, was to obtain an appearance of success, which in politics is always an advantage. The few Popolari who broke away from the Party, or were expelled from it, gave out, in defiance of facts, that they were many and a force. By their secession, which came about in clamorous fashion during the discussion of the new electoral law, they thought to draw with them the mass of the Party and so isolate the more lively anti-Fascist elements ; but, on the contrary, the secession isolated the few philo-Fascisti, who called themselves the National Centre and entered almost wholly into the orbit of Fascism. The waverings and reservations, natural enough in a certain number of Popolari who did not see clearly what Mussolini called 'the inexorable development of Fascism', were overcome as little by little it became clearer how irreducible was the conflict between the Popular and Fascist conceptions of public life.

More interesting was Mussolini's other objective regarding the Church, which has had considerable repercussions

even abroad. We have seen the nature of the problem of the relations between State and Church in Italy from the Risorgimento onwards, and the difficulties of finding a solution. A rumour, baseless, but skillfully disseminated, was to the effect that Mussolini's Cabinet meant to settle the Roman Question. It is not unusual to be asked abroad for information on the points already agreed upon between the Vatican and Palazzo Chigi (Mussolini's headquarters). The truth is that the rumour had no substance. The same rumour circulated during the Premiership of Nitti, a personal friend of Cardinal Gasparri, the Cardinal-Secretary of State, with details that gave it a certain credibility, but even then it was baseless.¹

Mussolini was not deterred by such trifles. In his relations with the Vatican and ecclesiastical affairs, he pursued a policy of favour. He issued various decrees improving the stipends of the parish and episcopal clergy, exempting parish priests from military service and introducing other changes which were well received. As a matter of fact, preceding Ministries had taken steps to better the hard lot of the parish clergy, but what they did was less spectacular, passed as ordinary administration, and was carried out with greater practical difficulty. Naturally, the organs of the Fascist and philo-Fascist Press took care to extol the ecclesiastical measures of the Government and to make them appear a novelty, so that they made a greater impression on a usually unsuspecting public.

Nor was this all. Former Governments had inclined towards a secular conception of the State, but the Fascist Government showed itself not only broader minded, but markedly clerical in tendency; it wished to appear as the protector of religion. It accepted in this respect the

¹ In 1926 the Roman question is again on the tapis following on the Pope's letter on the reform of the present ecclesiastical legislation in Italy—a letter alluded to by the Minister of Justice, Sig. Rocco, in a speech in the Chamber of Deputies; there is talk of secret negotiations between the Government and the Vatican.

theories of the French nationalists, who hold that religion is an *instrument of government*, which it is necessary to have in hand and to use. Since the Government and the Fascist leaders began by fearing a secret understanding between the Vatican and the Popolari, since they saw many priests in the provinces concerned with Popular or Catholic (for them it was all the same) Trade Unions and Co-operatives, and priests who were Communal Councillors or Provincial Councillors, or Secretaries of Popular Sections and even, on the top of that, a priest as leader of an Opposition Party, their constant aim was to favour the philo-Fascist clergy, to fight non-Fascist Clergy, to assault Catholic Young Men's Clubs (*Circoli*) suspected of Popularism, to support those they considered anti-Popular, and to work upon the ecclesiastical authorities, by means now of threats, now of blandishments.

In reality, there was never any understanding, either secret or open, between the Vatican and the Popolari; both, from the beginning, had taken care not to drag the Church into the political rivalries of Italy. Even the Catholic Associations, united in a central organization known as *L'Azione Cattolica*, kept aloof from politics as being outside the scope of their social activities; this did not save them from violent attacks. Those few ecclesiastics who occupied themselves with politics did so as free citizens, as happens in every State of the world, from France where four priests are Deputies, to Germany where a priest, Braun, has been Minister for several years, and Austria where Mgr. Scipel was Chancellor. Such priests neither intended to represent the Church nor to prejudice her interests by their activities. In spite of this, the Holy See, seeing the hostile attitude of the Government and the considerable number of aggressions—among which the most notable and painful was the Fascist murder of Don Minzoni, the Parish Priest of Argenta—invited the clergy to stand aloof from the electoral contest, while exercising their rights as citizens. This decision of the Holy See was exploited in favour of Fascism.

But what made the greatest impression on the feelings of many ecclesiastics and Catholics was the ministerial measure by which religious instruction for all was made compulsory in the elementary schools. To understand this state of mind it must be remembered that, for more than thirty years, the Italian Catholics had fought every Government to obtain that such teaching should be suitably given in the schools. The question has arisen in all modern States and received different solutions. In Italy the worst was chosen—to admit the theory and deny the practice. The new provisions under the Mussolini Government, which restored the catechism as a compulsory subject, were, in some measure, the result of an agreement with certain ecclesiastics, and solved at one stroke the perennial question. This fact was taken as one of the strongest arguments for the struggle against the Popolari, and for plain proof of an understanding between Mussolini and Pius XI. There was no lack of ingenuous priests and dignitaries to extol the merits of 'Il Duce' on behalf of the Faith; they thought to catch a glimpse of the old idea of union between Throne and Altar. But this time, instead of a throne, it was merely a question of a temporary Premier's seat.

§ 25. *The End of P.R. and the Capture of Parliament*

One of the preoccupations of Fascism was, and is, the temporary character of this Premier's seat. In the constitutional sense, Governments must change with the alternation of parties. Mussolini, instead, started from the conception that the 'March on Rome' had been a genuine investiture, and therefore sought the means of putting into action his declaration that 'Fascism will remain in power five years multiplied by twelve'. The General Secretary of the Party—then the ex-revolutionary Michele Bianchi, who had become at one bound Councillor of State—launched the idea of a reform of the constitution

so as to create the office of Chancellor, on the pattern of Bismarck in Germany. But the idea did not make a good impression, at that moment, in the ranks of the Liberal *fiancheggiatori*, or 'flankers', and philo-Fascisti; even among the Fascisti, Bianchi's proposals met with no success. With one of his rapid changes of front, Mussolini declared that there was to be no question of changing the constitution but only of a few slight modifications which would, in any case, be discussed by Parliament. On the other hand there was more support for the general idea of electoral reform and, in particular, for the abolition of Proportional Representation. A wide campaign had even been set on foot to this end a year before, partly because the Popolari, at the Turin Congress, had resolved to defend P.R. with all possible vigour, thus bringing once more before the eyes of industrial and agrarian capitalists the spectre of an understanding between Popolari and Socialists, and a whole past which they believed gone for ever.

After the war, P.R. had been introduced into Italy, as into many other parts of Europe, and had been applied in the General Elections of 1919 and 1921. When, early in 1919, the Prime Minister Orlando had been unwilling to yield to the pressure in favour of this reform, which had been first upheld by the Popolari and the Milan Association for P.R., Mussolini, Editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, had written a violent article threatening a March on Parliament if P.R. were not made law. Now, instead, he designed a bill to ensure that the Government should always have a safe parliamentary majority. His aim was to avoid having to depend on a Chamber that might eventually become hostile to him; a docile and dependent Chamber is the dream of all modern Dictators who must willy-nilly tolerate the existence of a Chamber at their side. He justified the proposal by references to the recent history of ministerial crises, to the difficulty of putting an end to them, to the instability of parliamentary majorities, and so forth. The Proportionalists proved that ministerial crises and the

instability of majorities are inherent in the parliamentary system, whether the electorate be restricted to the tax-paying classes alone, as was long the case in Italy, or whether there be single-member constituencies, or P.R. The fault is in men and things. In the difficult period of the Risorgimento, the Cabinets were much less stable than in the post-war period ; then the same argument of the instability of the Government was used by those who wanted an absolute Monarchy and demanded the abolition of the constitution.

As we have seen, the causes of conflict lay much deeper. This is plain from the manner in which the struggle for and against P.R. divided the Italian Chamber—for the first time since the March on Rome—and awakened the most obvious expectations among the masses ; it seemed to rouse a flicker of life, a tiny, wavering flicker of life, in a Parliament virtually dead since 15 November, 1922. The lines of Mussolini's Bill for Electoral Reform were as follows : The whole Kingdom to be considered as one constituency, divided into fifteen electoral districts to facilitate voting and to limit the list of candidates ; in each district no party to be allowed to put forward candidates for more than two thirds of the seats allotted ; the results of the whole Kingdom to be added up, the lists of each party being distinguished by a special symbol ; the party obtaining the greatest number of votes—provided they were more than twenty-five per cent. of the total—to win at one stroke two thirds of the seats (three hundred and fifty-seven out of five hundred and thirty-five) in the Chamber of Deputies ; the residue to be divided proportionately among the other competing lists.

The strongest and most obvious objection to this system was made in the name of the majority principle, which had hitherto been recognized in every electoral system. In this new system, on the contrary, a minority, proved to be such throughout the Kingdom, would have the status and seats of a parliamentary majority, so that electoral rights

became meaningless. Another objection was raised especially by the Popolari—that, by establishing a single centralized constituency and by the creation of a fixed parliamentary majority, every government would rule as absolute master over both electorate and Parliament. The Chamber would become a closed ring and the conflicts between the Government and the Crown, or the Government and the country, could no longer be resolved by the electorate, which would never again find its natural expression.

In the Press, criticism of the bill was sharp, and the defence very feeble. Mussolini declared, however, that to fight Parliamentarism he needed to strengthen the Government, and this he could not do without a majority to safeguard it against the manœuvres of parliamentary groups. While discussion was still hot in the Press and public meetings, Mussolini, fearing a coalition of all his opponents in the Chamber, nominated the three ex-Premiers, Giolitti, Salandra and Orlando, members of a Committee for the study of the bill ; he knew all three to be hostile to P.R. and therefore inclined to give their names to the new electoral machinery, whatever it might be.

Popolari, Socialists, Republicans, Reformists, and the Democrats behind Amendola, united to fight the bill, but while it was still in the Committee stage attempts were made to reach an understanding with the Government ; amendments were proposed in the desire to keep the contest on technical grounds, and not to give it at once a political character. This weakened the Opposition. The personal pressure of the Government and of its friends was heavy and continuous ; at the critical moment the man who was believed by Fascisti and philo-Fascisti alike to be the pivot of the situation, the convinced adversary of Mussolini, left the leadership of his party because of obscure Fascist threats of armed reprisals against the Church if the Cabinet were beaten in the Chamber. At the beginning of July, 1923, the political atmosphere was sultry and oppressive. Black Shirts were concentrated in

Rome. It seemed a reversion to October, 1922, and that a decisive trial to prove the power of Fascism was at hand. Mussolini met the Chamber in his usual two-faced manner. While on every hand wild rumours circulated of violent outrages and personal vendettas, and the armed forces of Fascism paraded in growing strength, even the galleries of the Chamber and its corridors and lobbies being thronged with them, Mussolini made a conciliatory speech, promising a complete return to order, to parliamentary methods, to concord between citizens and to respect of parties. The applause with which even the galleries greeted this speech crowned a success of the first order that perplexed the Opposition. Instead of voting against the discussion of the separate clauses of the bill, the whole Opposition, except the Socialists, decided to abstain. Thus the battle for P.R. was reduced to a debate upon mere technical details, and emptied of its political and constitutional content. In these circumstances there were defections from every party, and it became impossible to form a majority against the Cabinet. Public opinion, which expected a conflict between Mussolini and the Majority in the Chamber, was disappointed, and the hopes that this might be a first step towards the return of Parliament to its functions and responsibilities, and towards bringing the Government within the bounds of constitutional action and law immediately collapsed.

The new electoral law, which was rapidly passed by the Senate, closed the period of the liquidation of the old proportionalist Chamber of 1921, in which the Fascisti were a slender minority. The period ended in the confirmation of the 'totalitarian' system of Fascism and the dictatorial conception of Mussolini, countersigned by all the men of the declining political class, represented by three names, Giolitti, Orlando and Salandra. Eighteen months later even these men found it high time to break away from the Government, and to go into opposition. But, in 1923, they represented, each in his own way, the

conservative reaction of the so-called Liberals against the democratic current which, in defending P.R., defended one of the most exposed and most important positions for the elevation of public life and for the active participation of the people in it.

This first period, which coincides with the first year of Fascism, shows clearly what were the issues of Italy's two grave crises, the economic and political crisis left by the war, and the parliamentary and moral crisis of the ruling class. The wealthy classes and the Monarchy turned towards reaction and dictatorship as a means of salvation ; the people, coming forward to claim its share of political power and economic benefits, was forced back as an outsider to whom universal suffrage had been granted by mistake, but who must pay for this gift from above by heavier bonds and oppression legal and illegal. With the lapse of time and the development of events, the significance of the March on Rome, in these respects, becomes increasingly apparent.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN IN THE STREET AND THE IMPARTIAL CRITIC

§ 26. *Force and Consent*

THE Man in the Street is not given to subtle reasonings, historical syntheses, or political appreciations. He sees, feels, and reasons in a humble way according to the dictates of common sense.

Confronted with Fascism, the Man in the Street has often clapped his hands, but has sometimes remained uncertain whether to approve or disapprove. He has been a little disconcerted by unaccustomed displays of military force and, if on the passage of a Fascist pennant with '*Me ne frego!*' ('I don't care a damn') written across it, he has not hastily raised his hat, he has run the risk of a crack on the head from a Fascist bludgeon, or, more accurately, in current jargon, from a '*manganello*'.

The Man in the Street, if he sees the Fascisti belabouring a man who used to be a local 'boss', may say to himself that the man needed a good lesson. But his common sense tells him that this lesson should have been given by the Authorities, not by a Black Shirt who is not Authority. However, he may sometimes let that pass, thinking that the Black Shirt was only doing what those in authority should have done and did not do. But if, in his zeal to be the man who washed the blackamoor white, the Fascist reverses the position and becomes in his turn a 'boss' on a large or small scale, the Man in the Street modifies his opinion and concludes: *Si stava meglio quando si stava peggio!* or that it is a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire.

If the Man in the Street happens to be, say, an Englishman, who has come back to Italy in 1923 after having been there in 1920, the first thing he notices is that the trains leave and arrive to time, that he is not obliged to break his journey at Spezia or Aulla because of railway strikes at Pisa or Livorno, that the carriages are cleaner, or at any rate less dirty, than they used to be. He concludes that for Italy—for Italy, be it understood—a Dictator was a necessity, at least to make the trains behave properly. If the same Englishman happens later on to find himself in Florence during one of those disorders that awaken old instincts of faction in the City of Flowers, he sees at once that it is not enough to make trains behave properly, unless means are found to prevent such deplorable behaviour among men.

One of the things that make the greatest impression on the Man in the Street is the succession of Fascist assemblies, demonstrations, rallies, processions, with mobilizations of the militia, speeches full of threats and ugly-sounding words, the bearing of banners with truculent and gruesome devices through the streets, and songs of hate and vengeance even on the lips of children, who are trained in *Balilla*, or Fascist juvenile institutes. Above all, when he compares these gatherings with those that used to be held to commemorate the glories of the Risorgimento and to train the youth of the country in physical exercises and patriotism, he finds a difference. Then the prevailing sentiments were joy, love of country, serenity; to-day, they are hatred, rancour and turbulence, and, in the mouths of the speakers, the name of Italy alternates with names by which they curse, as enemies, other Italians, their own brothers.

The difference is usually attributed to the persistence of the war spirit, but this does not convince our man, who has also been through the war but has no such feelings of hatred and rancour.

He asks himself: Are these continual rallies really necessary? But then he remembers that in the hey-day

of Socialism there were great open-air demonstrations with much waving of red flags and the march past of young men with red carnations in their button-holes and girls in red blouses, and even the Popolari, though to a much lesser extent, had, here and there, their parades. He concludes sorrowfully that these habits are ingrained in the Italian people.

What he does not quite understand, for the Man in the Street with all his good sense is sometimes naïve, is how certain faces—and not a few of them—that used to be seen in Socialist processions, and one or two even in Popular processions, to-day appear at the head of Fascist processions, with black shirt and badge all complete, and some even with mottoes half-vulgar, half-threatening, scrawled across their chests.

He does not remember Giusti's 'Girella' (Weathercock). It made a great stir in 1835 and was dedicated '*All Signor di Talleyrand, buon'anima sua*', but at the bottom of the heart of every homunculus there is always a trace of Talleyrand.

When the man in the street sees an armed young man striding about the town with an arrogant air he says: 'There's someone who's got nothing to do!' And when he thinks that Mussolini is surrounded by such a number of just such armed young men, he reflects that it must be very hard for him to find something to occupy so many people who have nothing to do.

The Man in the Street cannot do without something to eat, clothing, and a room to live in, and certainly he is much put out that the cost of living should still be on the increase. He reckons that what, before the March on Rome, cost him a hundred lire, now costs him nearly a hundred and fifty.¹ He must have made a mistake, he says to himself, since he sees that many people have always

¹ The index numbers give an average of 100 for 1920 and of 136·63 for 1925. In the first two months of 1926 they reached 145·59 (Treasury Accounts).

money to spend, but his purse bears infallible witness that living is dearer. In return, he adds, the great upheavals of after the war are over. Is this through the merits of Fascism? Some say Yes, some No, and the Man in the Street takes a middle view and goes his way.

In his leisure hours he reads the papers, and, by a habit of long standing, turns eagerly to the news of the courts. Here he notices a contrast: the non-Fascisti are nearly always found guilty, while Fascisti, even those accused of having killed political adversaries, are all acquitted and even carried in triumph through the streets of the town; unhappily, the real criminals are never found. At first this was the exception, now it has become the rule. He does not wish to speak against the Justice of his country, for he knows that it has to keep itself above all suspicion, but—there is a but. The repetition in every town of resounding trials that always end without the discovery of the culprit, shows that there is something seriously wanting, to say the least, in the judicial and police authorities. This does not fit in with all the assertions of the potency and value of the present *régime*; the first virtue in a *régime* is to give equal justice to all. But in this respect the *régime* shows itself powerless, to say the least, and this is assuredly a weakness.

When the Man in the Street reads in the papers the chorus of praise rising to Mussolini from every side, he is certainly delighted to think that such a great man should govern the country; however, thinks he, too much incense intoxicates a man and turns his head; and he hopes that Mussolini has enough self-control not to stand very near the censurers. He reads all Mussolini's speeches; he finds that he talks too much and not always consistently, but then everyone has his faults, and one cannot expect Mussolini to be always himself. The frank, self-confident tone, however, pleases him, and it pleases him to think of a Mussolini who comes close to the crowd and talks to it. Not that he attributes much weight to the crowd; the crowd is liable to auto-suggestion and is always less intelligent than

each of the individuals composing it; but it acquires a mind of its own which generates certain elementary feelings that always mean something—an aspiration, an affirmation, love or hate. And Mussolini feels at his ease, for he knows he has the requisite qualities to manage the crowd, and this is one of the practices that best correspond to his old habits of a mass agitator.

But the Man in the Street would like to see these habits and qualities used to bring peace among the people. Who is there to stop it? he asks himself. The Opposition? But do they not say that the Opposition has no strength left, that it is done for, destroyed? It cannot be those few men with no following who hinder appeasement. True, they want to speak against the Government, but is not that in the blood of every citizen of any country? In Italy there is a famous phrase: *It's raining, O accursed Government!* Is it possible that an Italian should not speak against the Government? He must let off steam, somehow! And this has never hindered the Government from existing, working, and doing, like every other Government in the world, good and evil. If it is true that thirty-nine million Italians are with the Fascist Government, it should be easy to bring into the country the olive branch of peace. Where is the need of violence? Of an armed militia? Of continual threats of bludgeoning and banishment? Can they, by any chance, make everybody think alike? It is not possible!

The theory that pleases the Man in the Street is the binomial: *Force and Consent*. Assuredly! for force, he says, does not mean violence, but the legitimate use of power to ensure the observance of the law, which is, and must be, equal for all. *Consent* means that the *régime* must have the moral support of the people before their political support. The present Government has force; it may abuse it, but certainly does not lack it. As for consent, the Fascisti say that they have it. Those who hold the Fascist *tessera*, or card of membership, number nearly a million. The other

parties which used to govern Italy had the consent of the people, but they had not a single man with a party membership card. Who can doubt that the Fascisti have the consent of the people—or at least of the million enrolled Fascisti? But if this were so, the disarming of hearts, the disarming of the Fascist Militia should follow, for the strong man does not lose his calm because of criticism from those in opposition; on the contrary, serious criticism helps him, and any other is not worth bothering about. If this is not so, it means that the consent of the people is lacking to such an extent that every breath of criticism strikes fear. Consent forms the binomial with force, in so far as the one completes the other, turn and turn about. But if force prevails, then consent flies, and no longer exists; thirty-nine million men become subjects who endure, not collaborators who uphold. . . .

Thus the Man in the Street grows tired of thinking of force and consent as a binomial, and is convinced that their union is no longer to be taken as seriously as people would have him believe. If he must choose between force without consent and consent without force he concludes that the best thing in the world is to live and let live. After all, though, he does not give up his independence as a man who thinks without letting himself be carried away, who reflects with calm; after having seen that there were periods just as difficult in Italian life during the Risorgimento, he concludes that, if Italy has come through so ominous a past, she may well come through so ominous a present. Thus his confidence revives and he always looks in the papers for the pacific articles, speeches in favour of normalization, and tranquillizing news, which correspond to his state of mind, ever hoping for a return to systems of government equable and paternalist.

§ 27. *Finance and the Treasury*

On the other hand, the Impartial Critic who studies this strange and interesting phenomenon of Italian public life,

tries to gain a deeper knowledge of the subject and to hear the reasons of both sides so that his judgment may be ever more serene. It is difficult to find such a man, for when public life is in a state of violent agitation they are few who openly, or in their heart of hearts, do not lean to one side or the other. And often the impartial critic runs the risk of being in bad odour with both parties, for his judgment is despised as an Olympian philosophizing removed from good and evil. Yet it is not unprofitable to hear his view, even though its abstraction from daily life render it incomplete and perhaps sometimes even too logical.

Of the old political class we have said that, even in its decline, it was not wholly unproductive, and that in its acts we may find both good and evil. The same can be said of the present phase of Italian politics ; everything in it is not evil, nor is everything good. Those who judge absolutely of good and evil, confound actions which may in themselves be useful, with the political complex in which they have their more or less natural development. From this point of view it would be a mistake to believe either in the thaumaturgic powers of Fascism, or in its diabolic nature. Fascism is not the miracle-working Saint, nor is it the Devil who turns black everything he touches ; it is a human phenomenon producing good and evil. The present writer believes that the evil is greater, and more complex and general, than the good, and therefore he is opposed to Fascism. But let the Impartial Critic give us the result of his particular investigations.

It is necessary to draw a clear distinction between the new elements brought into public life by a party young, audacious, full of itself, unscrupulous, vain-glorious, eager to dominate events, and those that came from the former work of bureaucratic, traditional Governments obliged to keep on certain lines from which they could not easily turn aside. The distinction is not easy and often impossible ; there are, however, certain straws to show the way of the wind.

The first and most imposing problem after that of public order, was the financial question. Tangorra, a member of the Popular Party and a distinguished Professor of Political Economy at the University of Pisa, was for two months Minister of the Treasury in the Mussolini Cabinet, his career being cut short by an untimely death. While at the Treasury, he fixed at four milliards the deficit of the Budget at the moment when the Fascist Government came into being. The progressive improvement of the Budget during the five years after the war gave the following figures : twenty-two milliards deficit in 1918 ; seven milliards in 1919 ; seventeen milliards in 1920 ; fifteen milliards in 1921 ; four milliards in 1922. The greatest effort had been made, it was now necessary to do the rest—a matter of some difficulty. However, various bills had already been prepared, others were in course of study, and the first steps had been taken towards a reform of the financial administration in view of a surer and more rapid assessment of taxable resources. According to the opinion of many who have studied the question, Italian finance, from the point of view of revenue, would have reached the present position with any Minister and with any Cabinet, because the Administration of Finance is the best ordered and surest Department of State, because the Italian population bears with resignation every increase in the load of taxation, and, finally, because the machinery of fiscal legislation prepared by former Ministers would have brought in almost the same increase in the revenue—about three milliards more than in 1922.

According to our Impartial Critic, who reads carefully what is written on this matter by accredited financiers such as Cabiati, Einaudi, Flora, Griziotti, Paratore, or Gilardoni, the differences between the old and new *régime* are mainly three : The first is a greater rapidity in the promulgation and enforcement of fiscal measures—not of all, for some have been changed with equal rapidity, but certainly of the principal ones. This is due in part to the law investing the

Government with Plenary Powers, but it would not have been possible without the second difference—the fact that Fascist finance tends to fall most heavily on small incomes and on consumers, and to favour the capitalist forms of wealth. Thus the tremendous resistance of capitalists to former Governments, resistance direct and indirect, in the economic and in the political field, and especially on the question of the property tax, died away amid a chorus of praise from the yellow press. The great mass of the people, more hardly hit, since the unification of Italy have never offered any resistance, save for isolated and sporadic movements of protest in really exceptional cases. The third difference lies in the system of self-praise and advertisement in regard to the rapid decrease of the deficit, a vain and petty policy, intended to show how by a single stroke Fascism could work the miracle of parity. This has given rise to long discussions among theorists and practical experts, financiers and accountants, on the trustworthiness of the Budget figures, how they have been reached, and their absolute and relative value. The Italians have thus had continual lessons in the accountancy and consistency of their Budget. If they do not understand it yet, the newspapers are not to blame! The fact is that, from 1922 to 1925, revenue increased by about three milliards, which wiped out a great part of the deficit ascertained by Tangorra, leaving a fluctuating amount that may be met every year either by a decrease in expenditure (which is difficult), or by dexterous accountancy (which is easier). If a comprehensive criticism can be made of the Budget, it is that the increase in Revenue cuts deep into the economic development of the country, and that there is no corresponding decrease in expenditure, as had been promised. But for this fault every Government, not only that of Italy, could be called to account, for increased expenditure is in the nature of the modern State.

The first problem the Fascist Government had to face was the crisis of the banking concerns, economic consortia

and companies which had been formed or enlarged too rapidly during the war, and which, after a 'boom' period, brought about the collapse of immense fortunes. The Ansaldo crisis, that of the *Banca di Sconto* and that of the *Banco Roma* were the chief instances. The Treasury intervened through the Banks of Issue (the *Banca d'Italia*, *Banco di Napoli* and *Banco di Sicilia*), and procured the formation of the Consortium of Industrial Securities (*Consorzio dei Valori Industriali*), which was afterwards modified and amplified. This Consortium took over the enormous deficit of about six milliards, the funds being furnished by the Banks of Issue, with a corresponding increase in the monetary circulation for trade purposes. This increased circulation was guaranteed by the Treasury, which yielded up the proceeds of the tax it would normally have derived from it, in order to cover the deficit. The Consortium then proceeded to the administration and liquidation of the industrial bonds held as security. No one knows what will be the total loss, but there is no doubt that it will be enormous.

This vast operation had been preceded by timid essays under former Cabinets, but it was realized up to the hilt by the Fascist Government. While economists blamed and fought these measures, as economically and morally dangerous, industrialists and bankers applauded, seeing in them an un hoped-for safety-valve. The magnitude of the operation had an inevitable repercussion on the value of the currency. In short, the errors of the capitalists have been paid for by the country, and an invisible tax has been added to the visible ones. In view of this the Impartial Critic has not been able to approve the measure, though he recognizes the force of the objection that, if such important concerns had been allowed to collapse, the repercussions would have been very serious. The measures, however, show such signs of favouritism that the share-holders, such as those of the *Banco di Roma*, saved their shares, selling them even at a high premium.

The other questionable side of the Treasury policy has been the increase in the monetary circulation. This increase is not only due to the amount of money tied up in the Consortium of Industrial Securities, but also to the ever increasing demands of economic, industrial, and commercial undertakings. The policy of inflation is not an exclusively Fascist fault, remarks the Impartial Critic, nor yet exclusively Italian, but, instead of bringing it to a standstill, Mussolini's Government has intensified the error of past Governments. Change has been for the worse, not for the better.

This fact has contributed to the depreciation of the lira and to the adverse exchange ; from 1922 to 1925, in three years of Fascist Government, the lira has depreciated nearly a third.¹ The depreciation cannot be attributed solely to inflation, though inflation must be considered as one of its chief causes. The Balance of Trade at first improved considerably, then declined, and in 1925 the fluctuations continued.²

Another effect of inflation has been the increased cost of living. The Impartial Critic, however, notices at this point that the Italian population to-day endures with resignation a very considerable rise in prices, whereas when prices rose in 1919, agitations developed into looting of shops and strikes for higher wages.³ This is true ; but the

¹ The following is the average value of the lira in relation to the £ during the three years :

1922	...	Average in lire	...	93.86
1923	...	"	...	99.79
1924	...	"	...	101.76
1925	...	"	...	121.02

² Adverse balance in millions of lire :

1922	..	..	6,462.4
1923	..	..	6,103.6
1924	..	..	5,077.8
1925	..	..	7,882.0
1926	(first four months)		3,770.0

³ The index number for retail prices was 527 in October, 1922, as compared with 645 in October, 1925.

psychological state of the people is different. Then victory had crowned a long and arduous war, and people believed that material prosperity must return at one stroke—to-day they are convinced of the difficulties of life and strive to overcome them by toil and thrift. Then the drop in the lira was rapid and unforeseen, and there was fear of catastrophe—to-day it is slow and less sensible, and hence creates a lesser impression. Then there were elements exploiting the situation in two senses, Socialist and Fascist; to-day the exploitation is carried on in one sense only, in favour of capitalism, so that there is conflict no longer.

Nevertheless, there was in 1925 a period of serious panic when the Government believed it could check speculation in the exchange by means of decrees. It soon saw, however, that to try to regulate by decrees a function so delicate, so eminently free and fiduciary, was a grave technical and political error. So De Stefani had to yield his place at the Ministry of Finance to Count Volpi, and Nava to Belluzzo at the Ministry of Economy. Like all half-measures, this patching-up succeeded—for a time. Now the amount of money in circulation has again increased, and with it the cost of living.

One of the most difficult points in the policy of the Treasury was the foreign debt, which weighed and will continue to weigh on the whole economic life of Italy. The mistake of past Governments, and of that of Mussolini for the first two years, was to maintain what may be called an agnostic attitude to the question, while the Press, even the most responsible Press, continued a mistaken campaign against the acknowledgment of the debts and the duty of payment. But the unpardonable error on the part of Mussolini was his refusal to accept the Bonar Law Plan of January, 1923, which proposed the cancelling-off of eighty per cent of the debts of France, Italy and Belgium to Great Britain in exchange for a diminution of the German reparations debt. Finally, the Governments of France, Belgium and Italy, under pressure from American finance,

saw the necessity of coming to an understanding with their creditors in Washington and London. First Belgium and then Italy funded their American debts, while France after the preliminary conversations with Great Britain and the United States was for some months held up by grave politico-financial crises at home. Italy obtained favourable treatment from both the United States and Great Britain—a striking success for Count Volpi, the Minister of Finance, and indirectly for Mussolini. It is said that the Americans took into account the size of the Italian colony in the United States. It is certain that they, like the British, took into account Italy's economic potentialities. The voluntary 'Dollar Subscription' in Italy for the payment of the American debt quota of 1926, was a good sign of popular consent to the operation. Actually Italy is to-day paying for the mistake made not only by Sonnino and Orlando, but by all the Allied representatives at the Paris Conference, when they overlooked the important point of economic relations between State and State in their feverish excitement over Reparations.

One of the merits of all post-war Italian Governments, without exception, is that they did not deceive themselves like those of the Bloc National in France on the score of the amount of revenue to be expected from Reparations, and at once sought to lay the burden of the Budget on the taxpayer. France, on the contrary, is to-day suffering the serious consequences of the policy of 'Germany will pay'.

On the whole, the Impartial Critic, while recognizing the errors of the past and those of Mussolini, concludes that Italy in this matter could have done better but has done well. And hence he hopes that she will continue on the same lines in regard to the return to the gold standard.

In the matter of the gold standard the economists are divided ; some believe that an effort in this direction could and should have been made long ago, even if it meant facing grave difficulties of an economic and political order ; others,

on the contrary, hold that hitherto such an effort would have been impossible, that the change must be gradual, and that it will be achieved with less difficulty now that the British debt has been funded. Leaving the theorists to their discussions, it can be affirmed that Mussolini had caught a glimpse of the problem when, in the early days of his Government, he promised a rapid rise in the lira to fifty centimes gold (a sheer impossibility), but that with his unstable policy and considerable expenditure he has contributed to the greater depreciation of the lira and so rendered its stabilization more difficult. Even on this point the comments on the policy of former Governments can be repeated, with the aggravating circumstance that Mussolini's Government found itself more easily placed than the others for working with courage and rapidity and putting its finger on the wound. But what none will confess is that the continual decrease in value of the lira was, and is, a source of profit to certain sections of industrialists who speculated precisely in the fall of the lira, so as to pay their employees' wages and their home debts at a cost to themselves always less than the real amount contracted for, and to carry on an easy system of dumping. Will this be the same in the future? Since these are the sections supporting Mussolini's Government, politics require that their economy of rapine should not be too strongly opposed. At present it is the policy most accepted and followed. The Impartial Critic, eschewing political pronouncements, says that if the Government is in good faith it has made a mistake in failing to direct all its efforts towards a return to the gold standard on the basis of the actual purchasing power of the lira. Had it done so, a solution would sooner or later have been found with the least loss and the greatest profit. To-day, the unstable industries are in danger of collapse, those with large amounts of tied-up capital ask for ever increasing credits, and it is feared that a firmer hand on the reins would lead to serious economic consequences.

§ 28. *Economic and Administrative Reforms*

The Impartial Critic finds himself more at ease in dealing with questions less strictly technical than those we have just been considering. In the economic field he notes that the policies of the Fascist Cabinet have been various and not always conclusive—as is only natural in a state of effervescence like the present. Especially in economics the work of Fascism has been characterized by haste to pull down and to rebuild according to the developments of conflicting interests or the changing trend of public opinion. This has had disproportionate, or injurious results, because economy, by its very nature, does not proceed by leaps and bounds, but has laws and ways of its own. In this respect, human agencies must do as the doctor, who seeks only to facilitate the working of the forces of nature.

In this matter the experiments of those who believed in the miracles of State intervention and bureaucratic expansion—and they are not a few nor exclusively Fascist—nearly always yielded a negative result. At the beginning of the 'New Era' it seemed as though the way lay in an opposite direction to the old—contrary, that is, to State intervention and exaggerated protectionism. An end was made of all those bodies, great and small, which, during the war and after, had encrusted like parasites the organism of the State; the Ministers declared against the renewal of the protective duty on corn, and that on sugar was suspended. The Impartial Critic applauded. But alas! now brusquely, now with prudent manœuvres, the scene changed: protective duties were restored to life or increased; new financial bodies were created in which the State participated as a share-holder; fresh Decrees cancelled those which had abolished bodies deemed superfluous or harmful. Our Impartial Critic remained perplexed. If a balance-sheet were drawn up of the economic legislation of Fascism, it would show that, in

a short space of time, innumerable decrees and undertakings have come to nothing and lost all reality. A typical case is that of the creation of the Provincial Agrarian Councils, which remained in an embryonic state and never acquired vitality. Finally they were suppressed, and incorporated with the Chambers of Commerce to form the new Economy Councils. So far no better fortune has attended the Decree regulating civic rights, the result of about ten years of preliminary study, and answering, on the whole, the requirements of agriculture while satisfying the interested parties. The same holds good of a number of other measures, till the whole seems like Penelope's web, made in the day and unmade in the night.

The fundamental reason for this lies in a general psychological condition which arose during the war and after, and has culminated in the present *régime*. The very ease with which Decrees are made and unmade, incites interested parties to bring pressure to bear on the Government and Civil Service to obtain a solution which often corresponds to an only partial or incomplete view of the question. When the decree has been issued, without any preparation of the ground, and without any hearing of the opposite point of view through Parliamentary Debates or in the Press, hostile currents and injured interests rise up and put their case. This paralyses the Civil Service and politics ; even Fascist deputies are divided for and against, and the ease of issuing new decrees increases the insistence of the demand. Whether the Government yields in part or in the whole, or falls back on other positions, the immediate effect is that the public no longer believes in the stability and practicability of the laws, and this fact urges the more audacious to seek the greatest possible advantages for themselves : *Carpe diem !*

Nitti's old motto : 'Produce more and consume less !' has been repeated by Mussolini who, from time to time, takes measures that are now opportune, now exaggerated, to galvanize into activity the Central and Local Committees,

as he did in the corn campaign. This was a skilful move to turn public attention from the bad impression produced by the renewal of the corn duty—a piece of protectionism which lays on the consumer a load of more than two milliard lira of which about six hundred millions will go to the Treasury and the rest to producers and speculators. Almost in the same breath Mussolini started the cry that the production of corn must be increased so as to meet with home-grown corn the demand of the population. He knows, for it is a certain datum of agrarian economics, that Italy cannot produce the corn she consumes, that it is no advantage to put unsuitable zones under corn, and that it does not answer to the criteria of general utility to suppress more profitable cultures in favour of corn. The one thing that can and should be done is to improve methods of cultivation and to restrict it to the better adapted and more productive zones; even so, it will not be possible to meet the demand for cereals, and it will always be necessary to import the annual difference between production and consumption. However, the journalistic and political campaign was useful as a means of distracting public attention, while the agrarians lost an argument which would have strengthened their hand in the stipulation of treaties, especially those bearing upon the free import of agricultural machines and fertilizers in exchange for the free export of agricultural products.

But, in spite of everything, the Impartial Critic notes that the Italian people work and save with assiduity and ardour. They worked even in the period of post-war agitation, and they work to-day with most promising results. Is this a merit of the Fascist *régime*? The reply varies according to the state of mind of those who answer. Some give all the credit to Mussolini, thus obeying the instinct which exists in every people to create a 'Myth', as symbol and solution. Others on the contrary say, 'Yes, the people work and produce in spite of this and every Government'. The latter are those who in economics

and in many other things do not believe in the beneficence of any governmental intervention whatever, but consider that all State intervention, even if inspired by the best intentions and the most prudent criteria, must hinder and disturb the working of the economic laws. This reasoning contains some truth, but goes to excess ; State intervention should confine itself, in economic matters, to legal regulations, and, wherever necessary, to the stimulation of local and private energies. But it cannot be ignored that the policy of the State in regard to commercial treaties is one of the pivots of the economic life of a country. Between the two poles of free trade and ultra-protectionism there is a gamut of interests and combinations that cannot be left to the mercy of a Government, even the best of Governments, nor of a Civil Service, even the most honest and intelligent in the world, but must be appraised and guarded by the mass of citizens and their political representatives.

From this point of view, former Governments saved the form if not the substance, except that of Giolitti who approved by Decree—he, who had played the Cato against Decrees—the Tariff of 1921. But, in the matter of Tariffs, Mussolini, whether with or without Plenary Powers, has surpassed them all. And if the Impartial Critic says that behind Mussolini are the plutocrats of industry, he is immediately assailed by the Fascist or philo-Fascist papers, which denounce him as anti-national and an anti-patriot. Then the Critic, who loves study but does not love heated discussions, turns away from tariffs and economy in general, and thinks of examining this or that much-discussed reform. There are many, and he would need too long to go into them all, so he confines himself to the more important. He comes at once therefore to the reorganization of the Ministry of Public Works, made by one Minister, Carnazza, to be unmade by his successors Sarrocchi and Giuriati. With regard to Public Works he sees only that, all over the country, save for the motor roads of Lombardy and the plans for Rome and other

great cities (unproductive expenditure for the most part), the present Ministry is going on with works already set on foot by former cabinets ; nor could it do otherwise. What was blameworthy then is blameworthy to-day, for the old system continues of allotting insufficient funds to several undertakings distributed all over the Kingdom, so that none or hardly any are completed in time. Here then, history more or less repeats itself.

The Critic passes on to the surrender of the telephone service to private enterprise. From the point of view of service and economy things are neither better nor worse. The question, which yesterday was made to loom large, has returned to-day to the modest proportions of a measure of ordinary administration. Of the gravest problem, that of the railways, there has only been a makeshift solution. The railways belong to the State, the management should be independent but is not, while the administrative deficit exists, even if the ordinary Balance Sheet shows a surplus. The problem, aggravated by the war, has to-day come back to the point, political and administrative, where it was when the war began. There are, however, no more railway strikes. This Socialist disease no longer exists—is it the result of persuasion or coercion ? It is certain that, before the coming of Fascism, the great convulsions of railway strikes had ended, but the decisive phase of improvement in the service has come about under Fascism and partly through Fascism. How great the part of persuasion or how great that of coercion it is not possible to say.

The subject which the Fascist Government has treated with greatest hostility has been Labour. It has suppressed the Ministry of Labour, after having tried to turn it to its own uses. It got the King to sign the Decree for the registration of Trade Unions, prepared by the last Cabinet, and then would not publish it in the Official Gazette. It dissolved the old Higher Council of Labour and formed another in which the representatives of both employers and employees were to be nominated by Government ; but,

before reconstituting it, it abolished it, making it form part of the Single Council of National Economy which was nominated *ex officio* and has hardly functioned at all. The Government did away with the Provincial Arbitration Boards for the settlement of agricultural disputes. It brought to nought the bill on the Latifundia that had been passed by the Chamber. It modified and diminished the legislation on agricultural accidents, and annulled that on unemployment insurance. It subjected the Workers' Leagues and Trade Unions to Government surveillance, and sanctioned the right to dissolve them and to confiscate their possessions.

This reactionary policy aimed at coercing the Socialist and Popular movements, as we have seen, and was inspired by political aims ; actually, observes the Impartial Critic, it hits the interests, rights, and legitimate aspirations of the working classes. In 1925 the Government retraced its steps with an attempt at a wide system of labour legislation, based on the Fascist Corporations, though even this is merely a political superstructure.

This legislation recognizes the Corporations as legally incorporated organizations (*persone giuridiche*) and sole representatives of all economic class-interests. They are thus enabled to bind both employers and workers, whether these are registered in the Corporations or not. Moreover, there has been established a system of compulsory arbitration for all trade disputes, and the right to strike has been curtailed and even abolished. The Fascist experiment aims at bringing the whole of the economic life of the country under the political control of the Government and of the Fascist party.

The most discussed of Fascist reforms has been that which Mussolini called '*La riforma fascistissima*', the reform of the schools, directed by Prof. Giovanni Gentile. Why Mussolini should have called it *fascistissima* has remained a mystery. The Fascisti of the Congress of 1922 had pronounced against State examinations which were then

politically upheld only by the Popolari. But such is the case ; after the Popolari had fought for three years against almost universal opposition, they saw some of their own postulates in regard to the schools, chief among them the State examination, put into force by their adversaries. Nor is it quite clear why Mussolini should have appointed Giovanni Gentile Minister of Education. When, on 29 October, 1922, he telephoned to his friends from Milan the names of the Ministers he intended to select, those of the Ministers of the Treasury and of Education were wanting ; the names of Tangorra and Gentile were put forward in Rome by men not belonging to his party.

Gentile sought to put into practice two ideas : the first, the State examination, combined with the greatest respect for non-provided schools, thus satisfying the wishes of the Catholics ; the second, the application to the schools of State centralization and despotic control, thus satisfying Fascisti and Nationalists. He wished, moreover, to inspire his scholastic reform with the ideas of his Actualist philosophy ; this took away much of the credit from the useful measures he introduced, and has aroused a genuine reaction in the educational field.

His successors sought to attenuate the more rigid of his measures and to utilize his ideas of greater centralization. Time will show the advantages and disadvantages of the reform, but that part of it which belongs neither to Gentile nor to Fascism, the State examination and the recognition of non-provided schools, will remain a true benefit to Italian Education.

In the first year of the Fascist Government, a reform was set on foot dealing with charitable foundations, and provided for direct State intervention, the unification of funds, and their use for other purposes than those intended by the pious benefactors and testators. Against this reform the Popular Party were the first to rise, and they started a wide campaign. Circumspectly, the heads of the *Azione Cattolica* tried to persuade Mussolini that such

a reform offended religious feeling, and the reform, already begun, was prudently suspended though, here and there, it was perfidiously put into force. The Impartial Critic notes that such a reform corresponds to the criteria followed with anti-clerical intent by the Government of the Left under Francesco Crispi. A strange and yet a logical coincidence !

Another reform that aroused lively public interest and aroused the hostility of the Popular, Democratic and Socialist Parties and even of the *Azione Cattolica* was the legal recognition and State control of gambling. The Cabinet was at first hostile and rejected on moral grounds the proposal made by the Under-Secretary Finzi. Then, by one of the mysteries of the anti-chamber, the Cabinet turned favourable and issued the Decree. After the Matteotti affair, however, during which various accusations circulated, the Decree was withdrawn by the new Minister of the Interior, Signor Federzoni. The Impartial Critic declares himself entirely hostile to the whole proceeding. From time to time discussion on the matter is renewed in the Press. Nor is there any lack of interested parties to bring pressure to bear on the Fascist Government—which does not remain wholly insensible to their advances. . . .

A third reform, launched in the first year of Mussolini's Government, concerned the Communes and Provinces, and was called the Acerbo Reform after the Under-Secretary of State. Needless to say, it aimed openly at limiting the powers of such bodies, which had already been reduced to real subjection to the State, and this by the old Italian Liberal tradition which we have mentioned. So, in the midst of various acceptable and useful measures, was encamped the anti-autonomous and centralizing spirit. Italy has never understood the spirit of self-government in regard to the Communes and Provinces, nor is it therefore surprising that Fascism should aggravate the situation, taking away even the semblance of local liberties.

But the Acerbo Reform, never wholly enforced, is, as we

shall see, itself to be reformed by the appointment of Podestà, or Communal Governors chosen by the Cabinet, and by the abolition of elective Communal Councils.

On the whole, the criticisms to be made on the reformist ventures of the Fascist Government, especially during that first year when it had received from Parliament Plenary Powers, reduce themselves to two : First, that in general all reforms imposed from above and not ripened in the consciousness of the people by the experience of years, can be only makeshifts, varying in usefulness or harmfulness, and giving rise to other successive reforms. Secondly, that certain reforms link up with the traditional and bureaucratic past, and show an emphatic tendency towards centralization, that old chronic disease of united Italy, spasmodically aggravated by the action of the Fascist ideal.

§ 29. *Foreign Politics*

By an old tradition, foreign politics in Italy were the exclusive field of diplomatists or of a few Members of Parliament and specialized writers. The Press in general consistently supported the foreign policy of every Government. It was only with the publication in Florence of Prof. Salvemini's paper, *l'Unità*, and a little earlier, with the rise of the Nationalist Party, that there came into being two centres with more definite political tendencies and the beginnings of a species of public control over the action of the Government. Nationalism enjoyed little credit ; exaggerated elements prevailed in it, their critical value being stifled by exuberance of imagination and sentiment. There was never a clear and watchful consciousness to give positive value to public opinion in the matter of foreign policy. On the advent of the Fascist Government, however, the discussions on foreign affairs at first aroused a more eager interest. The Critic, impartial before everything, notices a general opinion that, under Mussolini, Italy enjoys greater consideration abroad.

If this were so, no Italian, even anti-Fascist, could fail to recognize his merit. In order to be objective it is necessary to analyse this fact, which is not imaginary, and has certainly had a foundation in reality. Public opinion is largely made by the Press ; in the early days of Fascism, the foreign Press, with a few reservations, extolled the figure of Mussolini and the Fascist movement, and, even later, together with considerable criticism, much has been written in their defence. The Conservative and Nationalist Press of the various parts of Europe, moreover, continues to exalt and defend, and a section of the Catholic Press abroad, especially in France, has often shown itself favourable to Fascism because of Fascist measures with regard to the clergy and because the papers in question have distinct Conservative and clerical tendencies. It is clear that the aura of favour which, in the average opinion of various countries, surrounds the person of Mussolini and the system he represents, and at the same time the desire of Conservative classes abroad that the Mussolini Experiment should succeed in full, have reacted in favour of the Fascist Government. As a result of the attitude of a section of the foreign press, many Italians resident abroad, who had often felt the bite of criticism and an atmosphere of general ill-will, took fresh heart with the coming of Fascism and felt drawn towards the Government of their country. This feeling was the stronger in that this Government came after a period when the depreciation of victory, the rebuffs of the Paris Conference, and the occupation of the factories, magnified as it was by the Italian and foreign press, had created an atmosphere of despondency that made not a few Italians living abroad uneasy for the future of their fatherland. This initial state of mind was, however, soon disturbed by Mussolini's action in forming Fascist Sections in the more important Italian colonies. A sharp division among Italians abroad was thus created, between those for and those against the Government, a division which has given rise to deplorable incidents, and has

caused our emigrant workers, in majority anti-Fascist, to draw towards the Socialists and Communists. And the passions on either side have renewed abroad the profound division that to-day afflicts the life of Italy.

The Impartial Critic notices that to-day Italy is discussed as an exceptional case towards which the two great European currents of nationalist reaction and social democracy look with sympathy or mistrust, according to their respective points of view ; they therefore tend either to over-estimate or under-estimate the phenomenon, to which they attribute more importance than to Italy as a State.

Passing into the real field of foreign politics, the Impartial Critic sees that Italy's position in the Entente, to-day as yesterday, is neither more nor less than that of a vote and a number, sought after because it is useful, respected when it is useful, overlooked when it is no longer useful. This position is not of Mussolini's making ; it is the fatal legacy of the War and of the Peace still weighing upon Italy. Mussolini, maybe, thought to turn this position to good account and has failed because he followed no definite line in his dealings with both Great and Little Entente and in the matter of the ' reconstruction policy ', which he and his Press have always persisted in disparaging. Unfortunately, he has found himself in the same position as Orlando ; after attempts at disparagement, he has had to agree to the Dawes Plan and the Locarno Pact, and he would have had to agree to the Geneva Protocol, in spite of his hostile affirmations before the Senate, if the Protocol had been accepted by the England of Mr. Chamberlain as it had been by the England of Mr. MacDonald.

Mussolini's gravest error was his opposition to the Bonar Law Plan which would have settled allied debts to England and prevented the occupation of the Ruhr. Mussolini, on the contrary, had already entered into an understanding with M. Poincaré, and did not go to Paris ; he enabled the latter to secure an easy triumph, giving him the Italian vote though declining to share in the military

occupation. M. Poincaré's move delayed European peace for nearly three years, aggravated the general economic conditions and lost Italy an advantageous settlement of her English debt, which would have been a precious precedent for the United States. What was the object of this attitude? It is a mystery. The error was too obvious not to be perceived even by Mussolini; that is why it is a mystery.

Another mistake, as far as the psychology of the world abroad was concerned, was the bombardment and occupation of Corfu. To the general Italian public, on the contrary, it gave an impression of strength. The massacre of the Tellini Delegation required that solemn satisfaction should be made to Italy, and on this point all parties were in agreement with Mussolini. But the occupation of Corfu, accompanied as it was by nationalist exaltation, redolent of Venetian memories, and other imprudent symptoms, gave the impression in England and France that Italy wished to disturb the balance of power in the Mediterranean. Another unfortunate impression was made not so much by the refusal to accept the intervention of the League of Nations but by the manner of that refusal, which appeared an attempt to cast discredit on that organ of international peace. All this contributed to make the foreign policy of the Italian Government suspect.

The solution of the Jugo-Slav problem, on the contrary, deserves praise. The main lines of this solution had been already marked out by the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), and the Convention of Santa Margherita (1922). Mussolini found himself at an especially difficult parting of the ways. He, and even more, the Nationalists, had fought bitterly against Sforza's policy. Nationalist rhetoric, harping on the results of the war, the memory of Orlando's gesture and of d'Annunzio's adventure, still kept people's minds in a state of agitation. All this excited the Fascisti and made future tactics difficult. Mussolini had therefore two roads before him: to continue the policy of Rapallo,

improving on it as much as possible, or to embark upon a struggle with Jugo-Slavia. He understood that the second way would be beyond measure dangerous and, in any case, untenable ; it remained for him to create an atmosphere of resignation, attributing to former Cabinets all responsibility for the agreement. Negotiations with Jugo-Slavia made possible the formal annexation of the city of Fiume to Italy, with rectification of the frontier of the *corpus separatum* in favour of Jugo-Slavia. The political solution was completed by opportune economic and juridical conventions, in the recent treaties of Rome and Nettuno. The definite solution of the Adriatic problem, as a consequence of the war, though tardy, can be considered satisfactory, and the policy of friendly relations with the neighbouring State is the only policy by which Italy can escape troublous irredentisms, insecure frontiers, and peril of conflict. The bitter polemics aimed at former Cabinets and especially at Count Sforza, who has been accused by Mussolini as a liar and a traitor, are only by way of playing to the gallery.

Another question of foreign policy which has aroused heated discussions has been that of relations with Russia, in regard to the trade convention and to the recognition *de jure* of the Soviet Government, granted almost simultaneously by Mussolini and Mr. MacDonald. Although it is possible to question certain technical details or particular clauses, the step in itself cannot be condemned ; at most it may be said that the usual exaggerated tone of Fascist papers and agencies has given it an excessive importance that has raised alarm in certain political circles. And the undisguised and mutual sympathy between the Governments of Moscow and Rome, and the absence of Italian approval for Roumania's annexation of Bessarabia, have inspired rumours, impossible to verify, of secret understandings, since officially denied.

The present writer has always been in favour of a renewal of diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia, in

spite of the reasonable distrust such a policy inspires in the Western world. Yesterday the watchword was to work *against* Russia ; to-day the cry is to work *without* Russia, but neither is seriously founded on reality, and it will be necessary to accept the idea of working *with* Russia.

A point in Mussolini's policy that does not correspond to more objective criteria and cannot be approved, is his attitude towards the League of Nations, an attitude either mistrustful or indifferent. The Italian delegates have followed these lines and have never been able to enter into the spirit of the League. Thus they did not realize the importance of the Geneva Protocol nor that of the Western Security Pact, and assumed towards them an air of tolerance and criticism. At the last moment, however, Mussolini persuaded himself that the tendency towards Italian isolation was inopportune, and went to Locarno to give his signature. Locarno, like the Dawes Plan, is a genuine result of the democratic, pacifist, and reconstructive policy that has always been satirized by the National Fascist Press of Italy. And the same Fascist Press actually tried to disparage the significance of Locarno ; and ultra-nationalist demonstrations, with hints of future wars, were not wanting. The constant tone of exaltation, the affirmations of a new Italian Empire, the excitement aroused by any foreign criticism other than benevolent give a sense of instability and an air of adventure that do not correspond to reality. Italy has to-day achieved her unity ; she is secure within her frontiers, she has solved the Adriatic problem, she is concerned with maintaining the balance of power on the Mediterranean, she can gain every advantage from helping to maintain the peace and assisting in the economic and moral reconstruction of Europe. The tone of Imperialist Fascism does not correspond to these facts.

Therefore the policy of the Fascist Government in the Upper Adige and in the Slavonic districts of Istria, with its refusal to recognize the rights of the alien minorities, or to respect their language, customs, and autonomy, tends to

create or exasperate an 'irredentism' bound to react on foreign politics. This has actually come to pass in regard to Germany and Austria, giving rise to hostile demonstrations involving Governments and peoples, and in no wise conducive to a state of concord, neighbourliness and economic co-operation.

Many other reproaches might be levelled at the Fascist Government, but where is the Government immune from reproach and criticism? The particular references made in this chapter, and others to follow in the course of the present work, would only have a limited value if they did not form part of a fresh policy and a special outlook on the problem of the modern State. Moreover, in the examination of each particular question, it is often possible to see how logically and historically it is derived from administrative, bureaucratic or political precedents that have been part of the woof of the new Italian State, and reflect the good and bad qualities of its unitary tradition. But the Fascisti, with Mussolini at their head, seriously believe that they have opened a *New Era*, and speak with conviction of an Italy made anew, and greater. This new Italy is not to be found in the more or less happy administrative or scholastic reforms, nor in the various ways of solving, as they appear, the practical questions of daily policy, but in the comprehensive political and economic structure of the State—that is, of the New Fascist State.

Here, our Impartial Critic, like the Man in the Street, gives place to the makers of policy and the creators of economy. And these, after the first year of the New Era, found themselves on a most agitated ground, summoned to face an electoral battle of special importance, to open, as it were, a really new phase of Italian life. We are in January, 1924.

CHAPTER VII

THE ELECTIONS OF 1924

§ 30. *The Electoral Campaign*

THE electoral campaign opened with a great show of novelty. On 27 January, at the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, before a large and applauding audience of political personages and Fascist leaders, Mussolini made one of his two-faced speeches in which there is matter to satisfy the most prudent and the most hot-headed. But the tone was that of the great occasions of exaltation and force. By one of his apparently illogical and inconsistent moves, he appealed to the electorate, like any democratic leader, at the very moment when he manifested his intention of obtaining greater independence from representative forms and a more despotic authority combined with the cult of force.

In this speech he destroyed the illusions of all the so-called 'normalizers'; for not only did he rule out the distinction made by many of his auxiliaries (the *fiancheggiatori*) between Fascism and 'Mussolinism', but he expressed the frankest and most approving confidence in those associates whom, the elections over, he was to drop overboard in tragic circumstances—Finzi, Rossi and De Bono.

The speech was an affirmation of intransigence with regard to electoral tactics, and showed a repugnance akin to disgust at the idea that Fascism should have to pass through this electoral phase; and, at the same time, it condemned every ideal of democracy and liberty skilfully confounded in the same reprobation as Socialism.

He desired above all to gain a majority entirely his own,

exclusively his own. The new electoral system was well adapted to this purpose. In his ranks, however, he had few representative men and very few men with administrative experience. Moreover, in the South, and in Sicily and Sardinia it was not possible to hold an electoral contest without the old local figureheads who, by tradition, held groups of families and coteries in their allegiance. Mussolini was obliged, therefore, to choose the candidates of his own List from among both Fascisti and friends of Fascism (the philo-Fascisti, or *fiancheggiatori*) in order to ensure himself a reliable parliamentary majority. The exactions of this philo-Fascist element, in part Conservative and clerical and, in majority, Southern, were such that, in order to content them all, extra, or 'Relief' Lists were formed, over and above the legal number of seats allotted to the majority. It was thus possible to place 375 Government candidates ; or, rather, before polling day, 375 Majority candidates were already elected against 160 of the Minority. In order to obviate the drawback that a certain number of Liberal or Democratic candidates adhering to Fascism might constitute an element of weakness in the Chamber, the greatest importance was attributed to the pure Fascist element both at the centre and in the provinces, and many men who had belonged to the old personal groups adhered to Fascism or, without more ado, turned Fascist. This new and extemporized Fascist allegiance, in contrast with their former ideas (if they had any) they themselves called the 'insertion' of Fascism into the State ; in reality, it only meant the insertion of certain Liberals and Democrats into Fascism. Among the latter two names stood out as would-be symbols : Salandra, the old chief of the Liberal Right, or rather of the Conservatives of the Right, and Prime Minister at the declaration of the war ; and Orlando, one of the most accredited chiefs of the Liberal-Democrats, Prime Minister during the last phase of the war from Caporetto to Vittorio Veneto. With them was a large part of their old following,

and a certain number of new-comers. (Even Signor De Nicola, President of the Chamber up to its dissolution, had been placed among the Government candidates, but he, at the last moment, preferred to retire from public life.) With these Government candidates there was an understanding, and, among them, a misapprehension: the understanding was that, even on the Fascist List, they would keep their political independence; the misapprehension lay in believing themselves in a position to influence Mussolini and the leaders of the dominant party to adopt a system more respectful of the rights of citizens and of constitutional forms. The Fascist leaders, however, took care to make sure of a majority of half plus one of the Chamber by having at least 268 sure and proved Fascisti out of the 375 Deputies elected on their List, so that the Liberal or Democratic philo-Fascisti were reduced to about a hundred.

But the precaution exceeded any possible peril, for the latter had already given such proof of their adaptability to the *régime* that their passage into Opposition could not possibly have provoked a crisis. This arrangement was, however, a sign of an exceedingly complex situation. The attempt of Fascism to assimilate and dominate politically the forces outside itself, brought about unprecedented congestion and confusion. A compromise, as vast as it was insincere, was made at Palazzo Viminale, whither hastened all the most significant figures in the economic and political world. By means of circulars and direct arrangement, the Federation of Joint Stock Companies, which is the centre of Italian industrialism, fixed a percentage of contribution to the electoral fund of the Fascist Party, amounting, the papers said, to about twenty-five million lire. Of this fund the greater part was to be used for the elections in a South still refractory to Fascist propaganda. The industrialists of Upper Italy first financed the armed Irregulars, then the political elections; the phases were different but the spirit animating the directors

of politicizing plutocracy was one and the same. They also hoped that the, shall we say, too lively methods adopted in the seizure and first assertion of power would be followed by methods of moderation or, to use the current expression, by 'normalization'. Therefore they saw with satisfaction both the entry of the old men of Liberalism into the Fascist List—since their entry widened the zone of confidence and respect among temperate elements, and most business men are such—and the penetration into the South, without which it would not be possible to govern tranquilly for any length of time. They would, therefore, have liked to see Giolitti in the Fascist List, but the old man preferred to make a List of his own, limited to Piedmont and composed of trusty friends, while declaring that this did not signify hostility towards the Government. In point of fact it voted with the Government majority. And Mussolini was satisfied.

The young men of Fascism, the more lively members of the armed Irregulars, the heads of the Corporations sought, on the contrary, to capture without delay a dominating position and to obviate the uncertainty of policy and dilatoriness of action to be expected from a Chamber in which the Fascisti proper would form but a tenth of the whole. They represented the political antithesis to Liberalism and philo-Fascist industrialism. With this duality of soul Fascism faced the electorate.

The Opposition parties, on the other hand, covered a wide range of political colours, from the Popolari, through the Democrats and Socialists, to the Communists and Republicans. These parties, whether taken singly, jointly or in two main divisions, were faced with a difficult problem: Should they do battle with the Fascist party, swollen as it was by the philo-Fascist contribution, for the majority in the Chamber, that is, should they present themselves to the electorate as a party, or several parties, united to overthrow the Government and to succeed it according to the rules of parliamentary tradition? In order to do so,

several parties would have had to combine firmly with a single List and unitary discipline and to fight strenuously not only to capture twenty-five per cent of the total vote but to surpass the percentage given to the Fascist List. Practically, it was not possible, for the three constitutional parties (the Popolari, the Democrats led by Amendola, and the Social-Democrat followers of di Cesarò), to come to an understanding with the four non-constitutional Groups (Unitary Socialists, Maximalist Socialists, Communists and Republicans), because of a fundamental divergence of principle and tactics which, for the moment, at least, was insuperable. Moreover, in the absence of moral and material liberty, none of the Opposition groupings could wage an open battle of such magnitude on an equal footing. Even before the Elections everybody looked upon them as already won by the united Fascist and philo-Fascist List. Thus each of the Opposition parties put forward its own List, incomplete, and in several cases not extending to every electoral district, with the aim, not of overcoming the Government Party but of assuring to itself a voice in the new Fascist Chamber.

On 26 January, a day before Mussolini's speech, the Popolari published in their Appeal to the country the following passage: 'The new electoral system, which the Popolari have opposed and will continue to oppose, places the independent parties in a position of inferiority towards the Government List. This List, which may be regarded as having been elected even before the verdict of the polls, depreciates the true will of the people, so that the Twenty-seventh Legislature can only be considered as a parenthesis in the constitutional life of Italy from 1848 onwards. Nevertheless, the Italian Popular Party takes part in the General Election with its own national List because it wishes to help in bringing public life back to constitutional normality and to oppose every attempt directed against Parliament and the political liberties of the Nation. . . . Our political programme remains unchanged, to-day as in

1919, in its *democratic character*, its *Christian* ideal, its *patriotic* aim and the *international* solidarity of its outlook. . . . The objects of the three statements in this passage—that the Popular Party considered the Twenty-seventh Legislature as a constitutional parenthesis, that it nevertheless took part in the contest, and that its programme remained unchanged—were, first, to fix the terms of its opposition to Fascism ; second, to reject the proposal, which had considerable support, that the Opposition parties should hold aloof from the Election ; and, third, to exclude revisionist and clerical elements from its own ranks. The other parties followed suit, adopting similar tactics and a similar platform.

There were no illusions about the electoral methods which the Government and the Fascisti would adopt in those days of contest. The air was charged with electricity. Mussolini's Government far outdid the system of bribes and intimidation that had marked the elections managed by Giolitti, when he was Prime Minister. It was natural that the man who, for several years, had exercised violence with impunity by means of armed Irregulars, should exercise it, once in power, to obtain a showy political success, and as though to confirm his government of force by a demonstration of popular favour.

If proof were wanted that here was merely an attempt to obtain an external demonstration of popular favour, and not a sincere recognition of the rights of the people, it could be found in the repeated statements of the Fascist party organizations and their Press that, even if the voting went against him, Mussolini would remain in power, strong in his militia and the 'rights of revolution'. There was thus complete disparagement of the principle of popular representation and of the new Chamber of Deputies.

All this complex of violence, intimidation, electoral intrigue and corruption was denounced to the new Chamber by the late Deputy Matteotti in his last speech, which was to cost him his life. The Parliamentary Elections

Committee could not supply impartial information because of the tremendous practical difficulties confronting the electors, who were intimidated by continual threats. The Opposition papers were full of the subject. Displays of force and wide use of the Fascist militia were avoided in the great cities on polling day, whereas they were used in the countryside and smaller towns. This was in order to give the impression, in the centres where public opinion was more powerful, that electoral liberty had been respected. But it is a striking fact that, wherever the electors were able in any way to record their votes without immediate coercion, the result was very favourable to the Opposition Parties. In the Southern Elections, on the other hand, the majority of voters abstained and small Fascist groups voted in their stead, repeating the operation ten and twenty times. In several places compromises were arranged between the heads of the local municipal parties, and the number of votes was allotted beforehand to each List, the greatest possible prevalence being, of course, given to that of Fascism. The Prefects and police officials were genuine electioneers, using and abusing their power for the benefit of the Fascist Government. In short, to the old methods of electoral corruption and pressure, well-known in Italy as elsewhere, was added the decisive weight of the Fascist militia.

The total result gave four million and a half votes to the Fascisti and nearly three million to the Opposition. Napoleon III was more fortunate than Mussolini. In the circumstances, the fact that the Opposition parties should have obtained so good a result was a sign that the state of mind of a good part of the country was still perturbed and distrustful of the new *régime*, and that the country had not yet undergone the process of 'fascistization'. Besides, the large number of votes collected in the South by old and new methods of Government pressure, did not mean that Fascism had a majority there. It meant merely that Fascism had rallied round it the exponents of strictly local life and had inserted them, as we have seen, in the Fascist

List, which for the South represented only a Government List.

In spite of everything, Fascism got an unfavourable response from Upper Italy, where public life is more intense and parties better organized. This caused the Fascist leaders so much displeasure and irritation that in the week after the elections assaults were made on the offices of newspapers and associations, especially those of the Popolari, and on several of a purely religious character belonging to *L'Azione Cattolica*; so much so that the Pope, Pius XI, took action on behalf of these last (which were in his native region of Brianza, in Lombardy), sending half a million lire to help to repair the damage. The papal gesture made a great impression.

The composition of the Chamber was as expected: 375 seats to the Fascisti and philo-Fascisti (Liberals, Democrats, and Clericals) inserted in the Government List; 25 seats to the Giolittians and other small independent groups; 135 seats to the Opposition parties, that is, 40 to the Popolari, 29 to the Unitary Socialists, 14 to the Maximalists, 19 to the Communists, 8 to the Republicans and 25 to the Democrats of Amendola and di Cesarò.

It is to be noted that while all the Opposition parties, to which the law had allotted a third of the Chamber, saw their parliamentary representation decreased, the Communists alone obtained an increase from 12 to 19, and gained votes and representation where no serious nucleus of Communists existed. This was not only a sign of the movement to the Left on the part of workers' groups that had deserted Socialism for Communism, but also of indirect favour on the part of the Government. In the elections the Communists were left almost undisturbed, and the Under-Secretary of the Interior, Signor Finzi, declared in his election speech, 'Better Communists than Socialists or Popolari!' But, in point of fact, whether tolerated or opposed, the Opposition parties, as a result of the provisions of the law and electoral methods in use, formed

little more than a fifth of the new Chamber, and the Twenty-seventh Legislature, born of an exceptional electoral law and of an exceptionally agitated contest, gave the Fascist *régime* a Chamber from which it need fear neither snap divisions, nor lobby intrigues, nor difficulties with political groups. The majority was numerous and united, and the minority reduced and split up.

It was hoped, therefore, that 6 April, 1924, the day of the elections, might mark the end of party lawlessness and violence.

§ 31. *The Murder of Matteotti*

Amid these hopes (not, however, shared by all), the session opened with the King's Speech. The date chosen was the 24th May, the anniversary of Italy's entry into the war in 1915, a date presumed to be of good augury for the internal peace of the kingdom. The King had a great reception; though his speech was drawn up by the Government, it was hoped that it would sound some genuine note of unity and appeasement among Italians. Discreet allusions of this kind were not wanting, but the general tone made the speech appear to ratify the *fait accompli* and to sanction the new *régime*. Hence the Parliamentary Minorities, in drawing up their Address in reply to the King, thought it well not to adhere to the Address of the Majority, which both explicitly and generally applauded the criteria of the Fascist Government. In their amendments and speeches the Popolari and Socialists made reservations of a constitutional, political, and social character, the Popolari especially calling for appeasement by respect for liberty. The atmosphere of the new Chamber was, however, extraordinarily excitable. Among the new deputies were many young men who had been through the war and had shared in D'Annunzio's expedition, in the activities of the Fascist Irregulars, or in the March on Rome—lively young men, full of themselves and of their own

strength, with a swollen sense of Party dominion and of the importance of the Fascist revolution, intolerant of criticism, contemptuous of their adversaries, and inexperienced in parliamentary procedure. For them, the past was Italy's evil, the present and the future her good, her only good ; opponents were simply 'the enemy'. The suffrage, which they had hitherto despised as antiquated, became in their eyes the consecration of the new Chamber, to be sharply defended against those who censured the electoral law or denounced the violence and intrigues of the Fascist electoral practice.

In them the sense of the legality of the legislative assembly and the solemnity of the representation of the people clashed with military bravado and the glorification of force ; they sought to reconcile these opposing sentiments by exalting Fascist dominion over the country, since they and none other were the new State and the New Nation. How could they, with such feelings, suffer their opponents freely to express from the Parliamentary rostrum dissent, criticism or reproach ? To their minds the Opposition parties had but to recognize the *fait accompli* and adapt themselves to it.

The agitation that marked the first days of the new Chamber culminated in Matteotti's speech in which he declared invalid the results of the election and the return of the Government List. So hotly was he interrupted, that a speech which should have taken barely twenty minutes lasted over an hour and a half. The Fascisti were at boiling point, seething with aversion and hatred. One must read the Fascist papers of the period to form an adequate idea of their state of mind.

June 10 marks a tragic date in Italian life. Matteotti had disappeared. The first thought was that he had gone to Vienna, and in support of this it was pointed out that he had recently taken out a passport. But soon more ominous rumours spread. On 12 June Mussolini declared that 'Matteotti had unexpectedly disappeared, in

circumstances of time and place not yet ascertained but such as to arouse suspicion of a crime which, if it had been committed, could but arouse the indignation and emotion of Parliament'. To this statement Signor Gonzales replied, on behalf of the Socialists, with the famous exclamation: 'Then Matteotti is dead!' At the end, when commotion was at its height, a cry was heard: 'Let the Prime Minister speak!' After a moment's silence the Republican, Signor Chiesa, shouted: 'Then he is an accomplice!'

Indescribable agitation followed. Chiesa was with difficulty saved from the rage of the Fascisti. The ensuing days passed amid extraordinary tension; the body of the murdered man could not be found, and the most ominous rumours were accredited in political circles and in the Press. Men intimately connected with Mussolini were suspected. The Under-Secretary for the Interior, Signor Finzi, and the chief of the Cabinet Press Department, Cesare Rossi, were obliged to resign—Rossi had been one of the Quadrumvirate who directed the March on Rome, Mussolini's intimate colleague, and a member of the Pentarchy for the drawing-up of the List of Fascist Deputies. Through the insistence of public opinion, and even of the Fascist Parliamentary Majority Committee, Senator De Bono was obliged to resign his post as Director-General of the Police. The same Committee demanded that the guilty persons should be brought to Justice, and proceeded to a '*revision of the work of the Government*'. In the meantime, the police arrested Amerigo Dumini, a man well-known to Mussolini, Commendatore Marinelli, Treasurer-General of the Fascist Party, Signor Filippelli, Editor of the *Corriere Italiano*—a Fascist paper financed by Genoese industrialists—and several others. Some days later, Cesare Rossi, against whom a warrant had been issued, surrendered after an attempt at flight. The well-known journalist, Filippo Naldi, who had abetted the flight of Filippelli, was also arrested. Another journalist, Bazzi, Editor of the *Nuovo Paese* and friend of Mussolini and Cesare Rossi,

sought safety abroad. As a sop to the public, Mussolini left the Ministry of the Interior on 16 June, and entrusted it to Federzoni, a man of Nationalist antecedents, considered sound and temperate, and acceptable to the Conservative currents. The news made a good impression.

The Matteotti affair, after several days of investigation, was reconstructed as follows : On 10 June, towards 4 p.m., on the part of the Tiber Embankment called Lungo Tevere Arnaldo da Brescia, Matteotti was carried off by five persons and put by force into a motor car going towards the Milvio bridge. (On that day, the police officers, who had been instructed to watch over Matteotti lest an attempt be made on his life, were absent.) In the car, Matteotti was murdered. The body was hidden. Not until 15 August, two months later, was it found in a shallow grave in a district of the Roman Campagna known as La Quartarella, belonging to the Prince of Piombino. The corpse was reduced almost to a skeleton, with the head separated from the body.

Matteotti, born at Fratta Polesine in 1885, of a wealthy family of Trentino origin, was a man of uncommon intelligence and of fighting temper. He soon joined the Socialist party and filled public offices. He was opposed to the war, and in 1916 was condemned for 'defeatism' but was acquitted by the Court of Cassation. He served three years as a private soldier in the war but was afterwards interned for his political antecedents. He organized the peasants of the province of Rovigo in Socialist Leagues, but opposed the post-war Bolshevik excesses. Elected a Deputy in 1919, re-elected in 1921, and again in 1924, he distinguished himself in the Chamber by his striking competence in financial matters. At the time of his murder he was Secretary of the Socialist Group and directed the struggle against Fascism, to which end he had collected much material which was being published in pamphlets and papers. Strong, angular, and wiry, he gave the Unitary-Socialist Group a sense of vitality. Perhaps it

was for this that he aroused the greatest hostility, and had to pay with his life the price of his convictions.

After the fall, by flight or arrest, of so many of Mussolini's friends and colleagues, 'Il Duce' thought to change also certain of his Ministers (among whom Prof. Gentile); not that they were in any way connected with the crime but because he found them in his way, or wished to make room for others. He changed also all the Under-Secretaries, doubtless in order to create a feeling of novelty and to efface the impression made on the public.

But in those critical moments some striking affirmation was needed to avoid collapse. He decided, therefore, to speak to the Senate, of which the atmosphere is more serene and less agitated than that of the Chamber. Accordingly, on 24 June, Mussolini made a very clever speech, deploring and showing horror at the crime which, according to him, was not only a crime but a blunder. He promised to '*soak up illegality*', denounced the Opposition's political exploitation of the murder, assured his audience that the Fascist militia should be brought into line, but declared that his policy remained unchanged.

The most remarkable answer was the speech of Senator Luigi Albertini, who maintained that the Matteotti murder was one of the lamentable effects of the *régime* of force, and demanded a clear separation of powers and a return to statutory liberties. Other speeches in opposition were made by the Senators Abbiate and Sforza, but the majority of the Senate gave Mussolini a vote of confidence. Thereupon he presented himself to his Deputies, assembled outside the Chamber, to announce the changes in the Cabinet, and the 'insertion' of the Fascist Militia in the State by the swearing of an oath to the King.

Thus 'Il Duce' thought to ward off the continuous blows of a public opinion, which was growing daily more impassioned over the Matteotti mystery, while crowds went in pilgrimage and carried flowers to the place—marked by a painted cross on the parapet of the Tiber Embank-

ment—where the murdered man had last been seen. The papers continued a vigorous campaign against the whole Fascist system and against the unsatisfactory conduct of the police, who had shown themselves incapable of preventing the crime or of finding the body, and disinclined to stop the flight of the various culprits whose arrest had been a result of the general indignation and of the indiscretions of others involved in the affair.

The ex-Under-Secretary of State, Finzi, sought to exculpate himself in his well-known memorial which contained allusions that struck higher. One had the impression of a *sauve qui peut*.

On the other hand, the parliamentary Opposition, united for the first time and unwilling to join in the commemoration of Matteotti by the Majority inside the Chamber, organized, on 27 June, a solemn Commemoration of Matteotti outside the House. In this manifestation many groups of citizens and workers in every Italian city took part. The Opposition also drew up a manifesto demanding light on the crime and a return to constitutional liberty, the abolition of the Fascist party militia, personal safety for Deputies in the exercise of their duties, the repression of all lawlessness and the restoration of the authority of the Law and of the State.

This document, remarkable both for its affirmations and for its effect on the country, contained the following passage :

‘ Now, in the light of the judicial proceedings set on foot under pressure from public opinion, in view of the evident reluctance of the police authorities, there has been revealed the existence of an organization, set up outside the law, to execute sentences against political opponents ; this organization has been found to be grafted on to the very organism of the Government and directed by persons in the confidence of the Head of the Government. And other clear indications have come to light of a vast tangle of corruption and trafficking, defiling the body politic ; of the creation of a

sinister association for the purpose of upholding by all and every means the positions of vantage and power which have been audaciously captured.'

The association in question was called in the newspapers the *Cheka*, an allusion to the analogous Russian organization. The document continued: 'The Opposition is sure of serving the supreme interests of the country when in a spirit of truth it affirms the logical and moral impossibility of separating the proximate from the remote political responsibilities of the Government by reason of their nature and origin. . . .'

Here was a political indictment to be put side by side with the following statement made by Mussolini himself five months earlier, on 27 January, in his speech at Palazzo Venezia:

' . . . Those who are regarded as the "evil counsellors" of the "good tyrant" are five or six persons [among them Finzi, De Bono, and Cesare Rossi] who come to me every morning with their daily report to let me know what is going on in Italy, after which they go away. This report, save in exceptional cases, does not last more than half an hour. In any case I must declare that towards them, the most direct collaborators in my daily toil, who share with me the bitter bread of direct responsibility for the Fascist Government, I express here, in your presence, all my friendship and gratitude.'

After issuing their indictment the Opposition Parties decided to abstain from attending the sittings of the Chamber.

When the Chamber reopened, in the absence of the Opposition and with circumstantial details of the crime coming thick and fast in the Press, the difficulty of resuming legislative business was generally felt. All felt as an incubus the shade of Matteotti, whose bones had not yet found rest in the grave. A few hours sufficed for the approval of the provisional estimates, and the Chamber rose till November.

At that moment it seemed as though Government and Fascism would be unable to resist the wave of popular indignation. Agitation was noticeable even in foreign political circles and the foreign press, so that the situation of the *régime* pointed to a fall. And assuredly there would have been a serious change in the political situation, but for the conduct of the Conservatives, Liberals and Democrats, or *fiancheggiatori*. Connected with the capitalist world, or the upper grades of the Civil Service, they would, in other circumstances, have thrown the Government overboard to save themselves from the storm. But now they acted as the saviours of the Cabinet, of Mussolini and of the *régime*. And among those politically most responsible, as in July, 1923, so in June, 1924, were Giolitti, Salandra and Orlando. If, in that tragic hour, they had withdrawn their adhesion and support from the Government, and had clearly shown their dissent from it, the numbers of the Opposition would have increased even in the Senate, and the wealthy classes, seeing the new *régime* doubtful, might have lessened their not disinterested assent to it.

But they were afraid of the future. It was said that the fall of Mussolini would be a leap in the dark. To justify themselves they pointed to the fact that the Opposition Parties, momentarily united, were not in a position to pursue an active policy or to form a centre round which might rally forces capable of wielding power without serious public commotion. They feared, too, the Fascist Militia which, in those days, had grown exasperated.

In them, that is, in the Liberal and Democratic *fiancheggiatori* led by Salandra, Orlando and Giolitti, the crisis of the old political class worked itself out. That class had already yielded up its power and was no longer in a position to regain it. Hence, between the alternatives of a Government drawn from the Opposition Parties and the reinforcement of the Mussolini Government, they chose the second. It was not they who were deceived but those

members of the Opposition who had believed it possible to bring these old men to life and make them the centre of a new situation.

This mistake was due, in part, to the fact that the Opposition Parties consisted of two very distinct sections, the 'Legalist' constitutionalists, i.e. the Popolari and Democrats, on the one hand and, on the other, the Socialists and Republicans—with the Communists (who, after a short time, broke away). Thus, while the Opposition Parties could unite in protest and secession, they could not coalesce to form a Government. The Opposition Parties therefore declared at once after the murder of Matteotti that their attitude of protest against the Government was based solely on moral grounds, and that it was not their aim to secure political power.

At a year's interval the position of July, 1923, when the contest round P.R. was given a technical and non-political character was thus repeated. The real question before the public remained the discovery of the truth concerning the murder of Matteotti and the names of those involved. In these circumstances, the constitutional question was placed beyond the range of parliamentary life, because neither *fiancheggiatori* nor Opposition, each for their own reasons, would provoke a parliamentary crisis or call for a direct pronouncement from Parliament.

So, shorn of the Opposition, the Chamber of 6 April, 1924, which had opened thus tragically, remained in a grey penumbra with no longer a breath of life. Its functions were more than ever limited to a formal registration of the will of the Executive power. All political life was transferred from Parliament to other ground on which the going was rougher and harder.

The cleavage expressed by the antithetical catchwords, 'Nation' and 'anti-Nation', and which was already in existence on the morrow of the March on Rome, deepened among the Italian people. All possibility of pacification on a constitutional and parliamentary basis, by ensuring respect

for liberty—a possibility founded rather on hope than on reality—now vanished utterly.

The duel between Government and Opposition passed definitely to other fields, and became a fight between ‘the Aventine’ and ‘Reaction’.

CHAPTER VIII

AVENTINE AND REACTION

§ 32. *The First Movement*

WHY was the secession of the Opposition Deputies from the Chamber compared to the withdrawal of the Roman plebs to the Aventine? There were no real points of resemblance. But it was enough that some journalist should make the comparison for the secession of the Opposition to be named after one of the historic seven hills. And the name—Aventine—established by use, will indicate in history a stormy period of moral and political upheaval when the real representatives of the people—the others were merely Government nominees—left the Chamber and adopted extra-parliamentary tactics of defence and attack.

When, on the morrow of the murder of Matteotti, the Opposition parties decided to withdraw from the session of June, 1924, their move did not imply prolonged abstention, nor did their declaration on 27 June contain any such proposal. During the summer, 'the Aventine' consolidated itself, and its tactical secession was confirmed in November when the Opposition Deputies observed that Mussolini had not fulfilled what they had demanded as a *minimum* for free parliamentary action. On the contrary, he had not even carried out the little that he himself had promised in his speech to the Senate under pressure of circumstances, and events bore witness that he had returned to those very methods which, after the murder of Matteotti, had been so severely censured.

Moreover, the discussions in the Press, the judicial

inquiry and continual indiscretions concerning the Matteotti case, brought out with increasing clearness the responsibilities of Fascist leaders, of the Heads of the Police, and of the Government itself, so that the moral question prevailed over political considerations.

The reasoning was simple : Since the Government was suspect in regard to the disappearance of Matteotti—and the suspicion did not extend merely to its political responsibility—it could no longer remain at the head of the public life of a civilized country. If innocent, let it defend itself ; if guilty, it should pay the penalty. But, whether to prove its innocence or to pay the penalty of guilt it must no longer remain in power.

To this reasoning the Fascisti opposed a fundamental affirmation : Even if guilty, the Government must stay at its post for it was the direct product of a revolution. The revolutionary government could not be called to account or, rather, Mussolini, as Head of the Government and head of Fascism, could not be called to account. A typical sentence, repeated by the Fascist Press, ran as follows : ‘ Certain thresholds must not be crossed ! ’

This reasoning, deduced from the premises we have studied, is quite unanswerable. More sophisticated was that of the philo-Fascisti, i.e. that there was no clear evidence to implicate the Government in the murder of Matteotti, and therefore it must remain at its post, for otherwise it would be pleading guilty.

The truth is that two mentalities, two ideologies, two consciences, stood face to face. Quite apart from controversial excesses, their positions were definitely antithetical. For this reason Mussolini’s equivocal declarations to the Senate and his pose as normalizer and peacemaker were soon left behind, and each side took its stand in irreducible antagonism.

The duel between Mussolini and the Opposition is dramatic and interesting. It has three movements, the first extending from 12 June to 30 December, 1924 ;

the second from 3 January to 13 July, 1925 ; while the third ended on 17 January, 1926.

In the first movement the offensive was taken by the Aventine, while Mussolini tried skilfully to defend himself and to reach a position which would allow him to take the offensive in his turn. On the moral question, after his speech in the Senate, he allowed the Opposition Press to go ahead, answering only by audacious gestures on the part of his most extreme followers, such as L'arinacci, or in local and minor Fascist papers. Meanwhile he sought means of bringing the Opposition journals into subjection. To this end, on 8 July, he issued a decree to regulate the periodical and daily press. This decree contained various restrictive measures. It defined the persons who might act as *gerenti responsabili*, or responsible managers, of papers and periodicals, and gave Prefects the right, after two official warnings, to withdraw recognition of such *gerenti* and thus to compel newspapers to suspend publication. In substance, journalism and the periodical press were brought under the control of the political authorities.

This Mussolinian stroke satisfied the Fascisti but made so dubious an impression on public opinion that the Liberals who, up till then, had upheld the Government, began to waver, and on 15 July openly invited the Prime Minister to change his course. All parties and all the non-Fascist Press protested ; the Association of Journalists and even the Bar and cultural Congresses showed themselves hostile to the Decree. Mussolini stood fast, though at first he enforced the Decree with moderation.

In the meantime, the Opposition parties, seeing that various groups friendly to the Government were beginning to doubt and to break away, redoubled their attacks both on moral and constitutional grounds. And Mussolini, well understanding that the first to leave him would be the industrialists and capitalists if they saw a leak in the ship, sought to stimulate the Fascist workers' movement so as to hold it in readiness for an offensive against the employers,

and also to prevent those sections of the working classes which were already in the Fascist camp from turning in discouragement towards Socialism.

But the blows came thick and fast. The ex-Service men had one main Association to which Mussolini had given legal recognition, thus bringing it under Government control ; at the same time it had preserved its elective constitution and governing assembly. At a Congress towards the end of July, at Assisi, the ex-Service men claimed independence, called for a return to normality in civil life, and decided to make the continuance of their support to the Government subject to the condition that the latter should openly condemn and oppose lawlessness.

So provoked was Mussolini by the action of the Assisi Congress, which he defined as 'hardly Franciscan' and likened to the Congress of the Popular Party at Turin, that, to counteract its effect upon waverers, he made the National Fascist Council of 6 August pass the following trenchant revolutionary resolution :

'The National Council of Fascism . . . reaffirms the necessity of developing the Revolution of October, 1922 . . . by effecting, in the *loyal* acceptance of Fascism and its insurrectional origin, the synthesis of all the forces of thought and production operating on the basis of discipline and national concord, assisted and *protected* by the sacrifice of the fallen members of the Militia and by the glorious traditions and proud revolutionary spirit of the *Black Shirts*.'

And Mussolini himself declared, on 8 August : 'Let it be known the *Régime* cannot be prosecuted !' A few days later, the body of Matteotti was found, at the Quartarella, in the Roman Campagna, in inexplicable circumstances and in such conditions as to arouse suspicion and give rise to gruesome hypotheses. The Press sought to investigate and explain, while the exhumation and transport of the body to Badia Polesine, in the Province of Rovigo, led to great manifestations of mourning. A

funeral in Rome was forbidden lest public order should be disturbed, or lest the demonstrations, which were certain to be on a grandiose scale, should take on a political character.

In these circumstances the second half of August was marked by vivacious attacks on the Government and the *régime*. To create a diversion, Mussolini revived the idea of constitutional and legislative reform and, to this end, caused the Directorate of the Fascist Party to appoint a Commission of fifteen persons under the presidency of Professor Gentile. Since it did not respond to the state of mind of the country, this move had little effect. Therefore, on 1 September, Mussolini counter-attacked in a lively speech, offering the Opposition Parties the following alternatives: 'Either peaceful co-existence within the bounds of the law, or we shall make of them [the Opposition Parties] litter for the Black Shirts!' This fire-eating language in the mouth of the Head of the Government made a painful impression and led to renewed attacks even by the moderate press. And since it was said that the King was perplexed about the fate of the Cabinet, Mussolini obtained a long audience on 6 September, and let it be understood that royal confidence in himself was still unshaken.

The Fascist and philo-Fascist press turned to account even a speech made by the Pope to Catholic University students in which he alluded with regret to possible understandings between Catholics and Socialists. But public feeling was yet more seriously perturbed by the murder of the Fascist deputy Casalini, which was at first believed to be a political crime. The Government, however, gave strict orders to prevent reprisals against the Opposition, and discipline was everywhere observed. Investigation and, later on, the trial proved that the murder had no political character but was the act of an unbalanced workman, the worse for drink—which did not prevent the Fascist Press from accusing the Aventine of having created an atmosphere of moral agitation in the country such as to

stimulate anti-Fascist political crime. Like the hunchback in the fable, the Fascisti did not see what an accumulation of political hatred and personal rancour they themselves had heaped up in the country ! Yet the Oppositions had never departed from legality in their strife with Fascism, nor had they had recourse, or urged their followers, to violence.

Meanwhile the National Congress of the New Liberal Party at Leghorn was awaited with interest. This party had drawn into its ranks a certain nucleus of the middle classes and liberal professions. Its principal figures were Salandra and Orlando and, later on, also Giolitti. It had adhered to Fascism and its Deputies helped to form the Government majority. Even after the murder of Matteotti they had voted confidence in the Government. At the Leghorn Congress two currents, the philo-Fascist and the independent, contended for mastery.

In order to forestall the decisions of the Congress and to lessen their importance, Mussolini made a polemical speech two days earlier at Milan on the invitation of the Liberals of the Right. In it he wrestled as usual with the contradiction between lawful and Liberal methods and the conception of force and absolute power. But it failed to carry conviction ; the Liberal Congress decided by a majority to cut adrift from the Government and to regain its independence. Its members even then had not lost all hope and the Liberal Deputies urged the Government to seek ' pacification, the repression of violence, and the subjection of all parties to the law '.

Yet, strange to say, the Liberals were unconscious of the moral question that agitated the country. Hence they were confronted for two months by the dilemma whether they would continue to support the Government or not, and though events obliged them to go into Opposition, there was a split in the Parliamentary Group. Some of its members, with a small following in the country, remained faithful to Fascism ; these passed through various phases and ended by giving up the name of Liberal (which was

ill-suited to them) and by being wholly absorbed into the ranks of Fascism.

Seeing that as far as the Liberal and ex-Service *fiancheggiatori* were concerned, things were turning out badly for him, Mussolini threw them a sop by causing General De Bono to resign the post of Chief of the Fascist Militia, and by causing the Militia itself, on 28 October, to swear allegiance to the King. In the press, the equivocal character of this oath was immediately denounced : though the Militia had sworn allegiance to the King, it continued to depend upon Mussolini as Head of the Government and of the Party. What would the Militia do in case of conflict between Mussolini and the King ? The second anniversary of the March on Rome demonstrated the absolute loyalty and submission of the Fascist Militia to Mussolini.

The situation remained dramatic. Serious incidents occurred in Rome between the Fascist ex-soldiers, the anti-Fascist ex-Service men of Free Italy and the wounded ex-soldiers, during the procession to commemorate the Armistice of 4 November, 1918, and the trail of polemics left by these regrettable events lasted for several days, rekindling passions on both sides. Several ex-Service Deputies resigned from the Fascist Party.

The problem of the Aventine Deputies continued to absorb public attention. Would they or would they not return to the Chamber ? They decided to prolong their abstention. At one of their meetings, Amendola strikingly expounded the constitutional question and the question of liberty, as against the efforts of the Government to impede the free activities of citizens and to violate political rights ; and he urged that to-day liberty must be saved outside, not inside Parliament.

Simultaneously Giolitti openly broke away from the Government in the Chamber (15 November). Orlando followed (17 November) and Salandra (17 December). Salandra resigned also his positions as Chairman of the

Budget Commission and Representative of the Italian Government at Geneva.

About the same time, documents produced during a case heard in Rome between Cesare Balbo and the *Voce Repubblicana*, obliged Balbo, one of the best known and most fanatical Fascist leaders, to resign his post as General of the Militia. In addition, facts came to light which induced the judicial authorities to reopen the inquiry into the murder of Don Minzoni, the Parish Priest of Argenta, which had been closed for lack of proof. These and other judicial episodes intensified the journalistic campaign for the moralization of public life. Reports of serious incidents in the provinces of Upper Italy came thick and fast, making a considerable impression.

The Government sought to parry these dangerous attacks by seizures of newspapers and prohibitions of meetings, but the Aventine redoubled its efforts. Amendola made another striking speech at Milan in which he defined the situation in the sculptural phrase: 'Free crime in an unfree State'—and called for a change of Government. Next day, in an official communication, Mussolini let it be known that 'strong in the support of the country and of his Majority, he had no intention of relinquishing power.'

In the Senate, the moral question and that of the Fascist Militia continued to be warmly debated. In self-justification Mussolini affirmed that he had kept the promises he had made to the Senate in the previous June, insisting on his will to peace—a will frustrated by the Aventine, according to him—but adding that even the Fascisti could make their Aventine: what would happen then? In the Senate this threat aroused uneasiness.

But the fight against Fascism became daily more intense. Dr. Donati, Editor of the *Popolo*, placed before the Senate an indictment of General De Bono, accusing him of having connived at many political crimes committed by Fascist leaders, and of other offences attributed to him in his capacity of Head of the Police. The Senate ordered an inquiry.

The rage of the Fascisti reached its climax. According to some a prosecution of De Bono meant a prosecution of Mussolini and of the Fascist *régime*. Mussolini's brother wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia* that the Donati indictment was 'a crime against the security of the State'. The Fascisti demanded an amnesty for all past crimes committed 'in the interests of the nation and of the *régime*'. The Chamber of Deputies refused authorization to proceed against its Vice-President, Signor Giunta, as the 'presumptive organizer of the assault on Signor Forni, a Dissident-Fascist deputy'. The scandal was great, because the application of the judicial authorities was based on sufficient evidence to indicate his responsibility. But Signor Oran, in moving the refusal of the authorization, declared : 'We must take on ourselves *en bloc* the responsibilities of Fascist history.'

Under the stress of the storm, Mussolini attempted a last diversion ; on the following day, 18 December, he brought forward a bill proposing a return to single-member constituencies, and dismissed the Chamber till 3 January. By this means he hoped to attract the Liberals who were in favour of single-member constituencies, and to give the country the impression that he desired pacification through a General Election.

The stroke failed. A few days later came the publication of Cesare Rossi's Memorial, a terrible indictment of the methods of the Fascist *régime* by one of Mussolini's most intimate followers. Its publication raised tension to breaking point. It was felt to be impossible that a problem which for six months had tormented the public mind should remain unsolved.

The First Movement of Aventine and Reaction ended with the impression that the conflict had reached its final phase. The Aventine seemed to have the upper hand. Its tactics appeared to have attained their end, not only morally but likewise politically.

What would 1925 hold in store ?

§ 33. *The Second Movement*

The Second Movement opens on 3 January in the Chamber of Deputies with a sensational speech by Mussolini which is at once self defence and a defence of Fascism as an historical phase, with its defects and its passions, with the will to dominate and the spirit of youth and overbearing power that make it one of the most interesting phenomena of the period. Mussolini decisively takes the offensive. He denies, above all, the existence of the *Cheka*, with which he had been saddled by the Opposition Press and by the Rossi Memorial itself. But, unable to deny the series of violent acts marking the development of Fascist action before and after the March on Rome, he not only tries to justify it but clearly takes upon himself the whole responsibility, declaring :

‘ It is said that Fascism is a horde of barbarians encamped in the nation, a movement of bandits and robbers ; the moral question is brought on the stage . . . Well, here, before this assembly, before the whole Italian people, I declare that I take upon myself, I alone, the political, moral, and historical responsibility of all that has befallen.

‘ If Fascism has been nothing more than castor oil and cudgels, not a superb passion of the best Italian youth, the blame is mine. If Fascism has been an association for crime then I am the head and responsible chief of this association for crime. If all the acts of violence have been the result of the historical, political, and moral atmosphere, then mine is the responsibility for this, for this historical, political, and moral atmosphere I have created, with my propaganda from the moment of intervention in the war until to-day.’

This declaration he followed up with a counter-attack on the Aventine as an anti-constitutional and seditious phenomenon, laying to its charge the renewal of reprisals in which various Fascisti had lost their lives, and accusing the Aventine of secret republican tendencies.

Finally he gave the assurance that, within forty-eight hours, this turbulent state of affairs would be brought to an end.

The forty-eight hours' undertaking was a clear signal for a general counter-attack, with on the one hand, suspension of newspapers, prohibition of meetings, domiciliary searches, and restrictive measures, so as to prevent any manifestations whatever against Government and Fascism ; and, on the other, the intensification of threats and violence, so that all thought of resistance should vanish.

The Aventine Opposition replied by publishing (8 January) a manifesto to the country, in which it said : 'The Government treads under foot the fundamental laws of the State, stifles with unheard-of arbitrariness the free voice of the Press, suppresses every right of assembly, mobilizes the armed forces of its Party, persecutes citizens and associations, while it tolerates and leaves unpunished the raidings and burnings that strike its adversaries and degrade Italy in the face of the civilized world.

The whole country is witness that the pretext for this repressive policy is a ridiculous lie ; no conspiracy threatens the nation, no attempt has been made on its laws. . . .

'The Aventine is neither sedition nor a conspiracy ; it is a resolute and irrepressible protest against the most atrocious crime of the *régime*.'

The moral question, continued the Aventine manifesto, existed and the Government could not get away from it. It could not invoke the 'rights of revolution' when Mussolini had received investiture from a constitutional King and had sought and obtained the sanction of Parliament. Nor could it, by appealing to the majority of a packed Parliament, clear itself of a responsibility which, in any case, Mussolini had taken on himself by his declaration of 3 January. And finally, it could not appeal to the country, for fresh Elections would only falsify anew the expression of the people's will.

As may be seen from these two documents, the new

positions were even clearer and better defined than the old. But the situation had been suddenly reversed ; the initiative was no longer in the hands of the Aventine, it was in the hands of Fascism. The Aventine had to confine its activities to a few meetings of Deputies and a few communications to the Press. Nor were all such communications permitted by the Government, which caused them to be seized, at will, by the Prefects, in the offices of newspapers and Press agencies.

The development of what Mussolini and the Fascisti called the defence of the *régime*, and what was actually and substantially the suspension of political liberties, continued with redoubled force. The suspension, however, affected only the Opposition, for Fascisti continued to publish their papers, to hold meetings and to indulge in polemics—in short, to enjoy every form of liberty, with no restriction whatsoever.

In this red-hot atmosphere Mussolini first made the Chamber and Senate pass his electoral reform bill. This was to serve as a bait but it proved ineffectual owing largely to the definitely hostile attitude of Giolitti and the Liberals. Then, by another and apparently contradictory move, Mussolini withdrew all value from the new law and eventual General Election by declaring, on 3 March : ‘ Better the [Fascist] Legions than the constituencies ! ’

At the same time he introduced repressive legislation, called, with habitual exuberance, the *leggi fascistiche* or ‘ Most Fascist Laws ’ : that is, bills dealing with the Press, with associations, the Civil Service, the Police and the Codes. These bills were all animated by one spirit, the same spirit as Mussolini’s speech of 3 January, and corresponding to the whole Fascist conception, which we have studied in Chapter V and shall return to in Chapter IX. Even if, in some technical details, these bills could be considered opportune, they represented as a whole a wide experiment in reaction and the suppression of every political and civil liberty.

The bill most discussed was that concerning associations; it was directed against Freemasonry and thus roused interest in Catholic circles and excited public opinion. Even in his Socialist days Mussolini had mooted an attack on Freemasonry, and had induced the Ancona Socialist Congress in 1914 to pass a resolution declaring the incompatibility of Masonry and Socialism. In those days his one aim had been to demolish the group opposed to him, led by Bissolati and containing certain well-known men like Treves, Turati and Modigliani who either belonged to Freemasonry or favoured it. On attaining power, he caused a similar resolution to be passed declaring the incompatibility of Freemasonry and Fascism (1923). But as in 1914, so in 1923 the results were neither clear nor concrete; moreover, in the second case there was a plainly marked distinction between Freemasonry of the Scottish rite and Universal Masonry, that is, between the Masonry deemed friendly to Fascism and that judged to be hostile. The anti-Masonic campaign, though masked by religious and national feeling, was at bottom political; that is, it was an attempt to strike down the adversaries of Fascism who were, in part, registered in the Universal Masonry of Palazzo Giustiniani. There were many Fascisti registered in both branches. The bill was aimed at any and every secret society, but its provisions struck also at other associations which had no secrecy about them. Legitimate on legal grounds and on a basis of political liberty, the fight against Freemasonry was later on to be transmuted into a special system for the persecution of an enemy feared more than its real power warranted on account of the shadow of the Lodges and the secrecy of their proceedings. Before the law passed the Senate and came into force, the struggle assumed a violent complexion, with assaults on Lodges, the hunting down of Freemasons (the events of Florence of 3 October, 1925, are well known) and, finally, with police occupation of the Lodges, by order of the Minister of the Interior, on 6 November, 1925.

Needless to say, the present writer is opposed to Freemasonry, especially in view of its anti-Catholic attitude and the secrecy by which it is surrounded ; but it is impossible to approve a system of attack that over-rides law and public morality.

The strictly reactionary turn taken by Mussolini's policy at the beginning of 1925 was supported by three groups of persons—the industrialists, who feared a renewal of the workers' movement ; the big land owners who feared a renewal of agricultural agitations—as an aristocracy with resounding titles they gave a significant political dinner in homage to Mussolini—and, finally, the Clericals, whose little hour of success was and is firmly bound up with the destinies of Fascism.

The Aventine, though renewing its protests from time to time, no longer possessed the means to carry on its political campaign, either in the Press or by propaganda. A current in favour of a return to the Chamber set in, on the occasion of the debate on the bills for the *Leggi Fascistissime*, in order to assert the principles of the Constitution. A 'Descent from the Aventine' was warmly discussed in the Liberal and moderate press, but the abstentionist current prevailed once again, and the Aventine continued in its attitude of secession and its stand on the moral question. At this period, however, the moral question, as a force in the political struggle went through a phase of involution, both because the public, into whose ears it had been dinned for a whole year, had got used to it and was no longer stirred by it, and because the various trials of Fascisti, accused of having killed their political adversaries, all ended in unqualified acquittals at the Assizes and often in public triumphs for the accused. Not one of the notorious trials, such as those of Mirandola, Ferrara, Pisa or Argenta ended by any sort of conviction. The triumphal acclamations with which the Fascisti greeted the acquittal of their comrades accused of the murder of Don Minzoni, deepened the impression made in ecclesiastical circles and in the

country by the acquittal itself. Respect for the Courts does not preclude reference to the abnormality of a situation in which so many serious crimes remain unpunished.

Nor did the prosecutions for assaults committed in broad daylight on Deputies like Amendola, Nitti, Forni, and Misuri, the names of whose aggressors were on all lips, reach the stage of a public trial until the aggressors, who had never been arrested, could profit by the amnesty granted on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of Victor Emmanuel III. Many had awaited this anniversary as an opportunity for a word of peace. The King himself wished it to be celebrated on the same day as the annual festival of the Constitution granted in 1848 by his ancestor Charles Albert—the first Sunday in June—as though the House of Savoy meant to renew its allegiance to the principles of constitutional liberty.

But those hopes were vain. The Chamber of Deputies had already begun the discussion of the 'Most Fascist Laws', and was to resume it that very June, and Mussolini, with one of his trenchant phrases, had summed up his intentions in the words attributed to Socrates: 'The greatest possible good to friends and the greatest possible harm to enemies'. A little earlier he had declared to his Black Shirts: 'Now Spring is coming and, with spring, fine weather; and fine weather for me and for you is the total, integral renewal of Fascist action, always, everywhere, against anyone!'

It was therefore natural that, on the occasion of the Royal Jubilee, the Fascist Majority in the Chamber should pay homage to the Sovereign by itself, and that the constitutional group of the Aventine should do so separately, with a special address which, however, was suppressed by the Government.

Thus the second movement of 'Aventine and Reaction' hastened to its close. The Chamber summarily adopted the 'Most Fascist Laws', including the Press bill and the bill placing all State employees, especially Magistrates,

Councillors of State, professors and school teachers in complete political subjection to the Government—a step that aroused dissent even in the Fascist ranks. Thereupon the various parties held National Congresses to re-affirm their tactics, thus sanctioning anew the irreducible antithesis and profound division between Italians. Most notable were the Congresses of the Liberals and the Popolari, each of whom, according to their particular political conceptions, sought the balance of social forces on a basis of liberty—precisely what Fascism repudiates. At a Fascist Congress, and by way of characterizing the phase about to end, Mussolini described the laws passed by the Chamber, and awaiting approval by the Senate, as laws of defence ; in the autumn would come the laws of reconstruction.

To the Fascisti he gave two watchwords : the first, ‘Absolute intransigence, theoretical and practical !’ ; the second : ‘All power to all Fascism !’ And while he reproved petty and unintelligent violence, he added : ‘You know what I think of violence. For me it is perfectly moral, more moral than compromise or arrangement.’

A few days later came the verdict of the Senate Commission, sitting as a Section of the High Court of Justice, on Donati’s indictment of General De Bono. There had been rumours that it would be a verdict of acquittal. Friends who, not without reason, feared an attempt on his life, urged Dr. Donati to leave Rome. (The Fascist papers were printing threats against him with impunity.) The Government, however, caused him to be stopped at the frontier, though ten days later he was allowed to cross into France.

The verdict of the High Court Commission, published on 27 June, acquitted De Bono for insufficiency of evidence on the counts of his participation in the assault on Amendola, connivance at the Matteotti murder, abetting the assault on Misuri, and granting passports with false names and dates ; while on the counts of having sent punitive expeditions to Ferrara and organized the murder of

Matteotti it denied his complicity. On the counts of traffic with intriguing women (the Viminal Countesses) and sharing in the profits of the sale of the war stock he was acquitted on the ground that these did not constitute legal offences; and on the counts of having taken part in a criminal association and of having protected gaming resorts, the alleged facts were declared to be non-existent. Thus one of the stoutest attacks on Fascism failed judicially. Morally, the verdict of the Senate Commission censured many aspects of General De Bono's conduct. This censure reacted on the political situation. And the Government, as though to reward the faithful old Fascist who had been one of the *Quadrumviri* of the March on Rome, shortly afterwards appointed him Governor of Libya.

The Aventine Opposition, however, found it opportune to question the decision of the Senate Commission and skilfully picked out the points in its verdict which, less indulgently interpreted, would have sent De Bono to stand his trial publicly before the High Court of Justice. On 13 July it issued a document of striking importance which, in the teeth of the Fascist Government, declared the moral question to be still open and unsolved, as follows :

'The conclusion is that the inquiry conducted by the High Court has brought out evidence more than sufficient to show that, under the auspices of the Head of the Government, men in his confidence, sharing the functions if not the real and proper responsibilities of Government, organized crimes to punish Deputies for their opposition to the *régime*; and that for the preparation of these crimes there was a special collective organization of which several of the members are known.'

The reply of the Aventine to the decision of the High Court of Justice was its last public act and marked the end of the joint protest of the Opposition Parties on the moral question. Successive events tended only to show that this period was already closed.

The wide amnesty of 31 July, which cancelled all the pending political trials save those concerned with murder, seemed also to have some bearing upon several of the men most incriminated in the Matteotti case. However this may be, this trial lost more and more of its political character, and remained only as an indication of the methods of violence which reaction defended and the Aventine opposed.

§ 34. *The Third Movement*

It is difficult to study the Aventine in its third Movement, for the Aventine, as a practical understanding among the secessionist Opposition Parties, ceased to exist on 13 July, 1925. The name survived, however, and continued to arouse polemics in the Fascist Press. While the various groups and parties which it covered were, in their several ways, resuming their freedom of action and defining their new attitudes.

It would be superfluous to describe the various phases and tentative efforts of the different parties since these concern only themselves. Their search for a basis of future action was, and still is, marked by the question of methods, that is to say whether these should be legal and parliamentary, as in the view of the Popolari and Social-Democrats, or take the form of negation and protest, as in the opinion ascribed to Amendola and his followers, or of Direct and revolutionary Action through the organization of the proletariat, as it is understood by Socialists and Republicans.

These discussions of tactics show that the Opposition Parties have gradually reverted to the positions they held in the period preceding the murder of Matteotti—with this difference, however, that the experience of some two years has dispelled the mistaken ideas that the Fascist phenomenon was a passing puff of wind, that the political class, which fell with the March on Rome, could regain its old standing,

and that political parties could return to their parliamentary or parliamentaristic methods.

But this third movement is much more interesting from the Fascist side. Victorious over the Opposition parties, the Government could not rest until it had destroyed their every stronghold ; the idea of Mussolini and his leaders is a Carthaginian peace, the utter destruction of the enemy. The Fascist papers after the close of the inquiry into the Matteotti case persisted in the conjecture, nay, the conviction, that the trial would be an indictment of the Aventine. Simultaneously the efforts of the Fascist Party and of the Government aimed at depriving the Opposition Parties of every means and possibility of regaining a foothold, in any form of public activity, political or economic.

To this end an understanding was brought about between representatives of the Confederation of Industrialists and the Fascist Corporations to establish that the Fascist Corporations should have the monopoly of trade union representation in dealings with the employers, thus excluding the representatives of the two other workers' confederations, the Socialist and the Christian-Social. Protests were not lacking, and the Catholics insisted on freedom for workers' associations ; the Fascisti replied by denying all rights to organizations other than their own. The head of the Corporations, Rossoni, said that their aim was to ' smother all trade-unionism '. An attempt was even made to bring about the ' fascistization ' of the co-operative movement, and, while the Vatican organ, the *Osservatore Romano*, defended the Christian-Social Trade Unions and Co-operatives, the Fascist organizations through the Co-operative Bank, *L'Istituto di Co-operazione*, took possession of the Socialist League of Co-operatives.

By means of Prefectoral decrees the Fascisti captured even the Press Association of Rome and, later on, those of Milan and other provinces, for the sole reason that the directors were not Fascist or not Fascist enough. The municipal elections of Palermo had brought about a renewal

of Opposition activities, this time with the collaboration of Signor Orlando, who had become the head of the Palermitan Anti-Fascist coalition. The City of the Vespers seemed a battle-field ; one felt that it might be possible to give the signal for battle. But the Fascisti allied themselves with the heads of the villages, which are for the most part in the hands of the Maffia, and exercised the strongest pressure, with arrests on a large scale—to such a pitch that Orlando decided to resign his seat in Parliament, and to retire into private life.

Of this success the Government took advantage to bring forward a reform extending the powers of the Prefects so as to place the Communes in complete subjection, depriving the greater part of them of their elective Councils by the appointment of seven thousand Podestà, and declaring politically ineligible the Councillors of such Communes as were allowed to retain a semblance of elective representation. It was thus made wholly impossible for the adversaries of Fascismo to assert themselves in the municipal field.

This and other reforms announced in the autumn months, such as the legal recognition of the Corporations and their right to nominate Senators, the creation of a special Prime Minister's Department involving a change in the Constitution, the punitive measures against Italian citizens abroad who oppose the Government and the Fascist State, gave rise to various speeches, in which, as in that of the Minister of Justice, Signor Rocco at Perugia, the main lines of the 'Fascist State' were set forth.

But an irremediable dualism between a *régime* with some sort of legal sanction and the tendency to anarchic individualism is the perennial destiny of Fascism. While these bills were being prepared and discussed, threats and violence were allowed free play. The echo of the events of Florence on 3 and 4 October, 1925, reached even the foreign Press, but events more or less similar occurred in various parts of Tuscany, in Rome, in Parma, and else-

where. The excuse for them was the fight against Freemasonry, which took the form of hunting down citizens suspected of being Masons. Farinacci himself, the Secretary-General of the Fascist Party, was obliged to remind the Fascisti that 'the domicile is inviolable', and the Government was forced to replace the Prefect and the Chief of Police of Florence so as to give satisfaction to a public opinion that had been deeply stirred.

Nevertheless, the comments on such disorders from even the philo-Fascist press, reticent as they were, and above all the assertion that the measures taken were signs of a change in policy, got on the nerves of the Fascist leaders, who returned to a lively campaign against *fiancheggiamento* with the cry: 'Either on this side, or on that!' Their thesis was 'No one is a good Italian who is not a Fascist!' and, towards the end of October, Mussolini proclaimed 'Totalitarian intransigence and absolute hostility!' Thus, those who wished to be friends of Fascism but at the same time to preserve a certain individuality of their own, ended by surrendering and taking the Fascist *tessera*, or else by withdrawing from public life. The first were greeted with exaggerated praise, the second with scorn.

It was already the beginning of November, 1925, and the 'descent' of the Aventine to the Chamber was under discussion. The Maximalist Socialists and the Republicans had hastened to break with the other Aventine parties. The Fascisti, now triumphant all along the line, were deriding their defeated and subdued enemies, when a grave incident supervened to aggravate the situation. The police announced that it had information of an attempt to kill Mussolini, and indicated as its author the ex-Deputy Zaniboni, who was arrested; he was to have carried out his plan on the very day of his arrest, 4 November, the anniversary of the Armistice with Austria, during the commemorative procession. There was at once talk of a plot; among those arrested was General Capello, who had commanded the Second Army on the Isonzo, and who,

in the early days of Fascism had even been a Fascist ; others were arrested and then released.

No exact information is available to give a true idea of the incident and its bearings ; the Government prohibited the papers from making inquiries into the matter, or publishing any news concerning it. Zaniboni was a Major in the Alpini, decorated in the war, and at one time a member of the Unitary Socialist Party.

The news of the plot made a deep impression on the country, and Mussolini became the object of great demonstrations in Rome ; the constitutional parties and their newspapers, though in Opposition, denounced the attempt as contrary to their principles of law and public morality. In spite of this, the Fascisti accused all the Opposition Parties, and especially the Popolari, of being morally responsible for the plot, saying that by their propaganda against the *régime* they had aroused hatred towards its chief. Moreover, the Fascist Press sharply criticized the fact that several papers, in blaming Zaniboni's criminal attempt, had repeated that they were opposed to all violence. As though it were possible to compare the violence of the Fascisti, considered by themselves lawful and a duty, with anti-Fascist violence, for which they came near to invoking Lynch Law ! All violence should be condemned in a civilized *régime*, but the absurdity of the Fascist proposition lies precisely in the wish to declare the use of violence lawful, but only when it is directed against their adversaries.

The Government, in the meantime, took the occasion of the plot to proceed even more savagely against its enemies ; it suppressed the Opposing papers, first *Giustizia*, the organ of the Unitary Socialists, then *Avanti !* that of the Maximalists, then *L'Unità*, that of the Communists, then *La Voce Repubblicana*, that of the Republicans. It prevented the issue of the *Popolo*, the Popolare organ, and of the *Mondo*, that of the Democrats, so that they both were obliged temporarily to suspend publication. Other papers and local weeklies, especially those of the Socialists and Popolari,

were suppressed, or ceased publication owing to continual seizures ; even the *Rivoluzione Liberale* of Turin, a weekly review, edited by Piero Gobetti and devoted to studies and criticism was suppressed. The same Gobetti was even forbidden to continue his work as a publisher. The attacks of the Government on this young intellectual were unintermittent. While still suffering from influenza he was forced to flee to Paris, where he died of pneumonia, mourned by all who knew and appreciated him.

Subsequently, perhaps because of the bad impression created in Italy and abroad, or for other political reasons, the Socialist papers received permission to continue publication. But at the same time the system of almost daily seizure was maintained against the *Mondo* and the *Popolo*, and Senator Albertini was forced to leave the *Corriere della Sera*, as being too hostile to Fascism. Owing to the European importance of the *Corriere della Sera*, there was severe criticism both in Italy and abroad of this fresh attempt to silence critical voices, especially the more authoritative. In the same way the philo-Fascist Liberal papers, such as the *Tribuna* and the *Giornale d'Italia*, were brought, by force or persuasion into Fascist hands.

Among other measures the Government dissolved the Unitary Socialist Party under the pretext that Zaniboni had once belonged to it, and caused all the Masonic Lodges of Italy, and the headquarters of the Socialist Confederation of Labour, to be occupied by the police. A genuine persecution of adversaries continued, either in the name of the Government, or carried out directly by individuals of the Fascist Party.

Thus with new laws, arbitrary acts, and private violence, the third movement of reaction pursued its course, asserting itself ever more as an element of dominion and an instrument of dictatorship.

Once the Chamber of Deputies had passed the 'Most Fascist Laws', dealing with the position of the Prime Minister, the Prefects, the Corporations, the Podestà, and

the Exiles, and the dictatorship had assumed a clearly-defined and legal character, many people believed that hostilities against the Opposition Parties might be suspended. But the Fascist spirit has always been intolerant of any dissent or criticism, especially on the part of the constitutional and 'legalist' parties. While the organs of the Socialists, Communists and Republicans were permitted to appear under Fascist control, the Democrats and Popolari were prevented from giving any sign of life. The Popolari who, without any departure from principle or change of attitude, twice attempted to return to the Chamber, were twice driven out by force by the Fascist Deputies. Mussolini, on 17 January, took on himself full responsibility for their exclusion, making the conditions of a return so humiliating as to imply the loss of all individuality and the abdication of all dignity. A few deputies passed this test of abjection, but the great majority resisted. Such was the inglorious end of the Aventine.

In the last phase of activity of the Opposition Parties, from November, 1925 onwards, the murder of the Deputy Matteotti, the origin and cause of the Aventine, seemed to have been lost sight of. It is true that it could not be mentioned because of the strictness of the censorship, but one cannot fail to recognize how far the unconcerted action of the different parties had deviated from the logical lines implied by the political platform they had established after the crime.

At last, however, came the trial, which should have brought the moral question once more to the fore ; it came when the Aventine was no more and no longer counted in the struggle against Fascism. With meticulous care the Government and the dominant Party stripped the case of all political character and interest, and of any element that would have shown their logical concatenation. Those indicated as having planned or shared in either the murder itself or the subsequent concealment of the body—as Marinelli, Cesare Rossi, and Filippelli—were placed out of

reach by the carefully-framed amnesty of August, 1925. The chain once severed, and inconvenient links removed—such as Rossi, who in his memorials openly accused Mussolini,—the trial was restricted to the actual agents of the double crime. Moreover, in order to ensure that in their defence before the Assizes the accused, and especially a certain Dumini, should not overstep the line and mention possible organizers, the charge against them was reduced. The murder of Matteotti was labelled ‘unpremeditated’, and at the same time any eventual sentence was limited beforehand by the application of the benefits of the amnesty.

Since for very good reasons Rome was ruled out as the seat of the trial, the choice fell on the town of Chieti, a small provincial centre in the Abruzzi. The defence was led by Farinacci, the General Secretary of the Fascist Party. Matteotti’s widow, in a dignified letter, withdrew from the case, a decision which the solicitors representing her and her children explained in a statement to the judges.

The result of the trial was what had been expected. It was confined to the actual murderers, three of whom received sentences which, by application of the amnesty, amounted to about two months’ imprisonment.

Public opinion had no way of making itself heard, in view of the severity of the censorship and of the police measures. The Fascist and philo-Fascist papers took care to belittle the significance of the crime and to blacken the character of Matteotti, whom they depicted as a most dangerous man, giving it to be understood that on the whole his death was not such a very great disaster.

Thus it is believed that this lamentable episode of the Fascist *régime* is buried for ever.

As though to mark the end of this phase of anti-Fascist strife, came the death of Giovanni Amendola on 6 April, 1926, at Cannes. He was one of the most authoritative leaders of the Opposition and a sturdy and convinced supporter of the Aventine secession. He too was a victim of Fascism. Fascist assaults on his person, planned by

responsible leaders, were carried out with the connivance or tolerance of the police on 26 December, 1923, and 20 July, 1925. The published documents clearly indicate General De Bono and Mussolini himself of having willed and organized these attacks. Signor Amendola received injuries such that his life was cut short, in tragic circumstances, at the age of 44. A scholar of no ordinary culture, journalist and orator, he served in the war and was decorated for valour. As Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister he gave proof of outstanding ability and experience. He fought Fascism with force and character. He died in poverty abroad, and will be remembered among Italians as one of the martyrs of liberty, worthy of a place among those of the first Risorgimento.

The death of Amendola, like the murder of Matteotti, the most serious and notorious of many episodes of blood and violence, have to-day fallen into place in the historical setting of the Fascist advent. By many, who till yesterday were still uncertain, they are now considered the inevitable accompaniment of a revolutionary political phase. Such persons make a show of believing that the moral question raised by the Aventine was never more than a political manœuvre which, thanks to the action of a strong and audacious Government, has ended in failure, with the triumph of the *régime* and its establishment for a long period of time.

§ 35. *The Reasons for the Aventine*

Before going further it would be well to examine dispassionately the policy and tactics of the Aventine, as we have been able to see them in the course of its stormy existence.

The Aventine arose as a protest. Its promoters did not anticipate that the protest would be so prolonged, thinking, maybe, that the gravity of the situation created by the murder of Matteotti must bring about a rapid solution, to

which the Aventine secession would give an impulse or for which it could provide at least a frame. If this was their view, and it cannot be affirmed with certainty that it was, events have not justified it. For the Opposition Parties put themselves out of action for sixteen months, in a position from which there was no natural escape, leaving Government and Fascism free to beat off their attacks and, having overcome the deep impression produced by the murder of Matteotti, to take the counter-offensive. Thus conceived, the Aventine marks a political defeat for the Opposition.

Yet, even if the first idea of the secession of the Opposition Deputies was one of simple protest, and if their immediate aim was to isolate the Parliamentary Majority, throwing it into sharper relief before public opinion, the Aventine assumed quite another significance within a very few days and particularly in the plenary sitting of 27 June, 1924—the significance of solemnly choosing the ground for a duel between reaction and liberty, between the present and future of Italy. In view of this, its immediate office was to show plainly, with the greatest possible clearness, the antithesis between Fascism and its governing policy, and the moral, juridical, and political principles of present-day civilized society, and thus to set up in the country a current of ideas and forces that would run in a new, definite, and wholly anti-Fascist sense.

Symptoms of this cleavage had not been wanting in the past, e.g., in the Popular Congress of Turin (April, 1923), in the fight for P.R. (July, 1923), and in the electoral campaign (January-April, 1924). Then, however, many had lacked the clear conviction that Fascism could not be converted to methods of liberty, that the very co-existence of the different parties and currents of thought, not to speak of collaboration between them, was no longer possible, and that, on grounds of public morality and law, the two conceptions were not only diverse but antagonistic.

The circumstances attending the secession of the Aventine from Parliament served to bring before the eyes of Italians

the whole problem of public life and to reveal, without equivocation or reserve, the antithetical character of the two conceptions known as Fascist and anti-Fascist. Starting from different political stand-points, a hundred deputies, despite the position of real inferiority in which they were placed, had the courage to proclaim the moral and political incompatibility of Fascism with their convictions. Thus these men abandoned the hankerings for compromise, the hopes of normalization, the declarations of 'flanking' support in which not only men of the old political ruling classes had indulged for eighteen months, but even some representatives of the young parties who were still unconvinced of the change that had taken place around them.

Therefore the Aventine was not an anti-Fascist battering-ram, but rather a halting place for the Opposition Parties of which the weakness or, at least, the indecision and passivity, the disposition to quibble over Mussolini's words and intentions, the inaction and inability to co-operate in a plan of campaign, had until then been most marked.

Whether, in taking a stand and affirming the antithesis between Fascism and Anti-Fascism, the Aventine was consistently successful or always retained the importance it should have had, cannot be said at a moment when, in its dispersion, it seems to resemble a fallen tree on which the woodcutter's axe has been at work while little worms and creatures of the soil assail its roots and bark. Yet it must be recognized that the position taken up by the Aventine obliged Fascism increasingly to declare itself, to reveal itself in its true light as a current of intransigence and intolerance, in what is to-day called its *totalitarismo*, increasing the centralization of political and economic life, suppressing every free manifestation, turning the powers of the State into a single governing power, the Executive, and reducing this to genuine dictatorship.

That this was what Fascism really implied, several of us

had already said, in speech and writing, but, in the eyes of Italians in general, evidence was lacking both because of the equivocation amid which the Mussolinian policy developed, and by reason of the *fiancheggiamento* or 'flanking support' given by moderate parties and the capitalist classes to the new Government. But when the ex-Service men, the Liberals of the Right led by Salandra, and the Democratic-Liberals by Giolitti and Orlando, were forced to detach themselves from the majority, and almost against their will, to regain their independence ; and when, finally, even the few *fiancheggiatori* who had remained faithful were compelled to join Fascism under penalty of being thrown away like squeezed lemons, equivocation was no longer possible. Italians were forced to recognize the real physiognomy of Fascism, its policy, its responsibilities, its nature, naked and unadorned. Undeniably, the Aventine had real merit in this clarifying of public life.

But the Aventine's most perceptible and morally useful office has consisted in raising and keeping alive the moral question. There is a limit of morality that cannot with impunity be over-ridden by man or party without a protest from the human conscience. Without entering into the merits of the penal responsibilities of the authors and organizers of the murder of Matteotti, and the many other murders which, for the most part, have remained unpunished, it can well be said that the leaders of Fascism, and Mussolini himself, have been forced by the action of the Aventine not only to attempt a justification of such deeds, but even to take the responsibility for them, to the extent of proclaiming the right to violence and its high morality.

All this is of great importance for the moral future of Italy. When passions have calmed down and Italy has come back into the company of modern States with free constitutions and of civil custom, she will not be able, even should she have received benefits during the Fascist period, to accept responsibility for so anti-Christian a code of morals and so anti-civil a theory. The merit of political protest against

violence, of the distinction between the moral responsibilities of parties, of the clear antithesis between the two currents of ideas, belongs in large measure to the Aventine.

Others have been able to write and talk, in an abstract and theoretical form, of public morality and Christian duty, and these, though aloof from the struggle, will be able to claim to-morrow that their principles have always been upheld in loyalty to a tradition which is also religious. But outside the Aventine movement and its political action, none can claim to have defended these principles on practical and pertinent grounds, to have exposed themselves to the rage of their adversaries, to have paid, in many cases, with their own persons, to have come to be, as it were, shut out from civil society, in a contest in which an essential and insuperable moral question came before everything.

If, after all, the action of the Aventine has not achieved immediate and visible practical results, this is no reason to deny its *raison d'être* which transcends the success of the moment and withstands the criticism of the *fait accompli*.

Two more charges are laid against the Aventine : first, that parliamentary secession was an anti-constitutional and seditious action ; secondly, that its anti-Fascist activity injured the country by widening an unbridgeable gulf between Italians.

To the first charge the Aventinians have replied that their secession did not repudiate Parliament and the Constitution ; on the contrary, it affirmed them, repudiating revolutionary rights and liberticide laws. Thus secession was a temporary expedient designed to throw into greater relief an incontestable fact : that the Chamber elected by Fascist law and methods was no longer an organ of true political representation in which the free expression of parties was respected. The possibility of a return of the Aventine to the Chamber was never denied, if and when it should be possible for them to exercise their political mandate on an equal footing. A seditious character on the part of the Aventine is obviated by the fact that it

did not aim at supplanting the political power of the Government by extra-legal or anti-legal means but, on the contrary, left the complete responsibility of the situation to the Parliamentary Majority and the King.

Any other than the Fascist Government would, in these circumstances have felt compelled to resign or to appeal to the country. The Fascist Government answered rather by the suppression or restriction of civil and political rights, and by the most lively forms of reaction and persecution.

The second accusation bears upon the direct task of the Aventine—to mark the antithesis between Fascism and anti-Fascism. Is this an evil? The profound division that has come about in Italy between the two antithetical positions may be deplored, but it corresponds to a reality. It is the same antithesis which, in the Risorgimento, brought conflict between the Liberals and the absolute Governments. In the next Chapter we shall analyse this conflict more fully. Here, we may point out that Fascism has never desired, indeed, it has always refused to put itself on a common plane with the other political parties, for it has denied every reason for their existence. It, itself, has wished to be the whole. For this it needed the utter surrender of its opponents, the total recognition of its advent and of the absolute right of the Fascist party to exist and command—that is, the suppression of every other political organization and personality. The antithesis was and is *in re*; it was not created by the Aventine, but the Aventine expressed it and made it concrete in motives at once practical and ideal. Here lies its merit for some, its fault for others; history will judge!

It is said that this could have been achieved by other tactics, even without secession. It is easy to be wise after the event, and the hypothesis may be true or false. It is often asked what would have happened if, for example, Waterloo had been won by Napoleon, or if the Germans had won the Great War—in regard to historical events,

great or small, hypotheses based on unrealized possibilities have little value.

Two other reproaches have been levelled at the Aventine from two special points of view. The first is that it united parties with divergent and even conflicting programmes and methods, a reproach principally directed against the Popolari for their union with the secularist Democrats and Revolutionary Socialists. The natural answer was that the Popolari were united with the others to vindicate the principles of morality and liberty in public life, not to apply a positive programme of Government, and that, in any case, even for such purposes, similar unions have existed and exist in various States of Europe, according to different conditions of time and place. This, however, was rather a point of controversy than a real criticism.

The other reproach made by the Fascisti, is that the Aventine and its press, with their intense campaign on the moral question against Fascism and Government, created an atmosphere of hatred such as to determine various criminal attempts against Fascisti, culminating in the Zaniboni plot against the head of the Government itself.

It is superfluous to say that the heads of the Opposition parties have denied that there is any truth or reality in this charge. The various anti-Fascist reprisals, which have been proved to be local and individual, have no connection with a party struggle on strictly political grounds. The disturbed moral state throughout Italy is due to the continual exercise of violence and several years of Fascist dominion in the different provinces. As far as the Zaniboni plot is concerned, it can reveal nothing with any reference to the conduct of the Aventine, which has always acted in the light of day, and always insisted on the strictly lawful and moral character of its activity.

But all these are controversial points, belonging to a past which once counted but counts no longer. The Aventine was an ill-fortuned phase of the fight against Fascism ; it petered out after having fulfilled certain functions of un-

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impeachable value. But the time for such an attitude is past, like that for any attempt to carry on the struggle in Parliament, in the Press, in associations or in meetings. The antithesis no longer lies between *Aventine* and *Reaction*, but goes deeper : its terms are now *Fascism* and *Anti-Fascism*—the assertion and negation of the *Fascist Régime*.

CHAPTER IX

BOLSHEVIK RUSSIA AND FASCIST ITALY

§ 36. *Two 'Myths'*

THE successes of Reaction over the Aventine have not lessened the tension between Fascism and anti-Fascism. On the contrary, they have the better revealed what a few saw from the beginning—the absolute intractability of the former, an intractability natural enough since the existence of Fascism depends on the non-existence of its adversary : *mors tua vita mea*. How else could one explain the intolerance of all criticism, the fight *à outrance* not only against the Opposition Press but against any paper in the smallest degree unfavourable ; the stifling of every dissentient voice, the assimilation of every favourable person or nucleus and their subjection to a single discipline ; the forcible seizure of every nerve-centre of public life and the effective control of the economic life of the country ; the control even of the activities of Labour by means of the Fascist Corporations, the only recognized and operative organ ? Instinct drives Fascism to instal a *régime* of violence, to become the total and sole expression of the country, and thus to use every possible means to suppress its opponents, lumped together under the comprehensive name of Anti-Fascism. This name has no real meaning, for it includes men, parties, attitudes, ideas, all widely differing and even conflicting ; it has, however, a positive sense if it is taken to represent an element antagonistic to the 'totalitarian' and absolute position of Fascism, that is as a demand for and an assertion of the *method of liberty*.

We say *method of liberty* because the substance of liberty

and of civil and political liberties is diversely appreciated by the several parties or theories of Anti-Fascism, while the method of liberty has been hitherto and still is esteemed and in use among all civilized peoples, save in Russia and Italy, and in certain Mediterranean zones of no great importance. This method of liberty implies the lawfulness of expressing diverse political ideas. Party propaganda of various kinds, even if directed against those in power, or contrary to the very constitution of the State ; the right to vote, even against the Government or the dominant Parties, are lawful, possible, respected, or tolerated, provided that they remain within the bounds of those laws of civil society that tradition or usage have sanctioned.

With this 'method of liberty' it has been possible to eliminate despotic powers, to achieve responsible government, to give scope to political currents, to create organized parties, and to give the people a means of lawfully expressing its desires and its will, without risings, violence, or explosions of hatred on the part of a community oppressed or misled.

But this 'method of liberty' presupposes a state of mind, a conviction, that no man, no party, no faction may use any other method, and that those who use methods of force and violence shall be automatically put outside the pale of civil society and politics ; moreover, it presupposes that no man or party or faction should by right be proclaimed above the rest as though invested with absolute and inalienable command.

It is evident that the conflict between Fascism and Anti-Fascism has an irreducible term that cannot be got rid of ; the method of liberty rules out Fascism, the method of dictatorship and reaction rules out Anti-Fascism. Compromises, so dear to the intermediate element, can only start from a recognition of accomplished facts, that is, the double victory of Fascism with the March on Rome and the fall of the Aventine, and its right to unchallenged dominion over the country. Anti-Fascism must be wiped out, it must go to Canossa, after which the ex-adversaries may live

in silence and abjection. Opposing parties and ideas cannot, shall not live save by the good pleasure of the victors, that is, with no life of their own.

This position taken up by the Fascisti towards their adversaries may seem the same as that of the Liberals of the Risorgimento towards the 'Legitimists' who upheld the thrones and dynasties of the suppressed States. It was evident that the Unitary Kingdom ruled out the co-existence of the separate States into which Italy had been divided, and the constitutional system of the new Kingdom ruled out the co-existence of the despotic governments of the past. We have said the two positions may seem similar, but they are not ; for in those days the princes and Kings of the suppressed States had lost a war or abandoned their thrones, and the new Kingdom inherited their rights ; the legitimists, if they chose the method of liberty, had their rights of citizenship in the new Kingdom, but if they chose the method of subversive action against the new State they had to feel the rigour of the law. Actually they confined themselves to a few manifestations of resistance and protest and, little by little, disappeared.

On the other hand, the most exact comparison with the position of Italian Fascism is offered by Russian Bolshevism.

From the beginning the second Russian Revolution rejected the principles of democracy, the constituent assembly and the traditional forms of individual suffrage, and laid, as the foundations of the Pan-Russian State, the Soldiers', Workers' and Peasants' Soviets ; thus public power was appropriated and, by means of armed revolt, was reduced to an expression of the will of a single party. The fight between Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries on the other, during the period of Kerensky's first revolution, between March and October of 1917, formed a precedent for events in Italy between February and October, 1922.

Trotsky wrote : ' . . . the fight for the formation of a Soviet Government could only be on revolutionary grounds.

It was necessary to wrench the power from those incapable of constructive work, and who increasingly lost their capacity for acting as things went forward. . . . To their road, which led to the artificial preliminary Parliament and to the hypothetical constituent assembly, we had to oppose our road, leading through the mobilization of forces by the Soviets to the Soviet Pan-Russian Congress and to revolt.' One might be reading a description of the movement of the *Fasci* from June to September, 1922, to the Naples Rally and Congress, and to the March on Rome (October, 1922). In fact, on 25 October, 1917, the Winter Palace was surrounded by Bolshevik troops and the fall of Kerensky proclaimed, and on 26 October the Pan-Russian Congress proclaimed the Provisional Government of the Workers and Peasants.

The difference between Lenin's movement and that of Mussolini lies in the fact that Lenin from the first ruled out a coalition Government, and Mussolini at first agreed to one. But this difference is merely formal; for the non-Fascist Ministers in the Cabinet soon perceived that they were to contribute nothing politically, and, on certain occasions, nothing even technically or personally. They were the shadows of a feigned coalition which presently faded away and vanished.

Trotsky wrote: '. . . A coalition with other parties would not have been able to widen the social base of the Soviet Government; on the contrary, such a coalition would at the same time have brought into the composition of the Government, elements profoundly corroded by political scepticism and idolatry of the Liberal bourgeoisie. . . . All the strength of the new Soviet Government lay instead in its radical programme and resolute action.'

With the same mentality Mussolini has gradually shaken off all outside support and all importunate *fiancheggiamento*, entrenching himself in the radical and extremist conception of his party.

There are other points of contact between the new Russia and the new Italy. From the first, the Bolsheviks were ferocious in the repression of every move contrary to the Soviets, in the suppression of all opposition and of every current not wholly favourable to the *régime*. The Soviet method expressed the primitive soul of Moscow and the force of a profound revolution that had ended with the establishment of the domination of the proletariat over the Russian middle classes and bureaucracy. But it was the result of the transition from one tyranny to another. Hence its methods of repression were ferocious and took the form of deportations and shootings.

In Italy the passage was not from one despotic power to another, but from a political class in process of crisis, to another that had supervened. Thus the armed Irregulars, the castor oil and the bludgeon, or *manigance*, sufficed, and graver incidents such as the slaughter of Communists in Turin, the murders of Don Minzoni and Matteotti, the fatal bludgeoning of Amendola, the events of Florence, and others of a like nature were really superfluous. In Italy the elimination of opponents could have been brought about by less tragic means, and in such a way as not to alienate the sure support of basic forces like industrialism, the Monarchy and a part of the Clergy. What was important was to succeed in denying to opponents every right, all power and share in public life. In this respect Fascism has learned much from Bolshevism.

In the Russian constitution there are various organs of power but the fountain head of power is nominally the Soldiers', Workers' and Peasants' Soviets. No elements outside the framework of the Soviets possessed rights civil or political; they are nothing, the Soviet is the All. Here is a unilateral and 'totalitarian' conception of the highest order. Art. 7 of the Bolshevik Constitution says: 'In the moment of the decisive fight of the proletariat against the exploiters no place can be made for the exploiters in any of the organs of power, which must belong wholly and

exclusively to the working masses and to their authorized representatives, the Soviets of the delegates of the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants.' Hence Art. 3 lays down that 'in order to guarantee the plenitude of power to the working masses, and to avoid any possibility of the restoration of the power of the exploiters, the Congress decrees the arming of the workers, the formation of a Red Socialist Army of workers and peasants, and the complete disarmament of the possessing classes'.

Here are the two Fascist canons : 'The whole of the power to the whole of Fascism !' ; and 'whoever touches the Militia will get bullets !' (Mussolini's exact words). Whoever looks at Mussolini's work, with all its apparent discontinuity and inconsistency, will find that from these two ideas he has never deviated, not even in the most difficult moments of his dictatorship ; on the contrary, he has gone on working out his plan in order to make himself, by deed, by law, or by decree, master of every administrative and economic activity.

In this the Bolshevik example has been most useful to him. The Bolsheviks have worked the elections so as to ensure that the will of their party shall always prevail. The elections are carried out round the factories, workshops, barracks, or hospitals, according to the organization of the local Soviets, and there is always a representative of the Soviets in the electoral Commission ; the Soviets judge the electoral contests on the basis of a report from a Commission nominated by themselves, and, in last instance, their Central Executive Committee decides. It is clear that this electoral machinery—if it is possible to speak of elections in such a *régime*—gives the Soviet Communist Party absolute dominion.

Fascism, as we have seen, reaches the same results by various paths, from the electoral law of July, 1923, to the elections of 6 April, 1924, and even to the suppression of parties (as in the case of the Unitary Socialist Party, in November, 1925). The election of the Senate by the

Corporations, when it comes to pass, will be another step in the same direction.

Even in the treatment of the problem of local self-government and decentralization Russia had anticipated Italy ; the idea of a stronger centralization has prevailed over every hankering after self-government on the part of local Soviets, in regard to public administration, to economics, and finally to the party itself.

In Italy to-day the Fascisti are further advanced, with the appointment *ex officio* of Governors and Podestà to the Communes, with the reduction of the elective Councils almost to the position of consulting bodies, with the extension of the powers of the Prefects, with the centralization of the Government in the hands of the Premier, and the centralization of the party in the same hands under the guise of ' Il Duce '.

In Russia there was a question of the independence of the workers' trade union organizations, at any rate in their economic functions, and resolutions in this sense were not lacking ; but the common practice and general policy has been towards an effective subordination of the Trade Union to the Communist Party. Likewise in Italy the Fascist Corporations are to be subordinated to the Fascist Party and, when they have received legal recognition, also to the Fascist Government which, in any case, has identified itself with the Party.

With reference to this confusion between Government and Party, the separation of the organs of the Communist Party from those of the Pan-Russian Government was demanded and even proposed more than once ; and, in April, 1922, the Congress of the Communist Party decided in this sense. But every such decision clashed with the reality which was, and is, the prevalence of the party over the State. Thus has come about the constitution of the true type of ' Party-State '.

In Italy, instead, we find a Party identified with the Government. The organs are apparently distinct,

though not all, for the Head of the Party is at the same time Head of the Government though not of the State, and the Secretary of the Party often commands almost as though he were a part of the Government and of the State. It is useful to remember Farinacci's order that the Chamber of Deputies should be closed on 10 June, the anniversary of the murder of Matteotti, when the Speaker, who had at first demurred, ended by yielding.

In substance, only one difference is to be noticed between Russia and Italy—that Bolshevism is a Communist dictatorship, or Fascism of the Left, and Fascism is a Conservative dictatorship, or Bolshevism of the Right.

Bolshevik Russia has created the Lenin Myth, Fascist Italy the Mussolini Myth; and neither would have been possible had not Lenin and Mussolini known how to give fervid and concrete expression to general states of mind, and to mark their action with the impress of an immediate utility.

Trotsky wrote: 'In all the months preceding the events of October the Social-Revolutionary party of the Right could have taken up the governing power. In spite of this, however, that party evaded the responsibilities of Government, yielding its lion's share to the Liberal bourgeoisie; and since this occurred precisely at the moment when, by the numerical composition of the Constituent Assembly, the Social-Revolutionary Party was under a formal obligation to form the Cabinet, these facts helped to deprive it of whatever consideration it still enjoyed among the revolutionary section of the people.'

If we change the words 'Social-Revolutionary party' and substitute for them 'Italian Socialist Party'; and, instead of 'Constituent Assembly' put 'Chamber of Deputies', we can apply the whole of the above passage to the Italy of July, 1922, in the period of the first crisis of the Facta Cabinet, when Turati obtained an audience with the King but afterwards refused, together with his

- 、 Socialist friends, to take the responsibilities of office, thus contributing to create a general state of mind disposed to believe the coming of Fascism inevitable.

To-day, owing to logical and historical premises, both countries, Russia and Italy, each in its own way and with its special circumstances, are undergoing dictatorship to such an extent that opponents of the ruling power no longer exist formally, legally or actually. For an opponent is not a rival on an equal footing, but a mere negation, called in Russia Anti-Bolshevism, in Italy Anti-Fascism. All this has created the Myth of the Saviours of the Country—in Russia, the Bolshevist Myth, in Italy the Myth of Fascism.

§ 37. *The Reality of the Two Régimes*

It is possible to discuss at great length whether the political and economic policies of Bolshevism are the best suited to present conditions in Russia, and whether those of Fascism are the best suited to present conditions in Italy ; and the conclusion, according to the various points of view of the protagonists, might be favourable or the reverse. Actually, we are dealing with two phenomena which are not only important in regard to those two particular States but have attracted a certain European interest, partly because similar states of mind exist in sections, more or less wide, of other countries.

In the third part of this work we shall study the general conditions of Europe with regard to the two antithetical terms, Fascism or Bolshevism, and Democracy. In this chapter it is profitable to persist in examining the substance of these two phenomena, and their points of resemblance.

Italian Fascism, on its way towards 'totalitarianism' and despotism, faces a problem that has much perplexed political thinkers of the present day—whether the Parliamentary system has fulfilled its office, and whether present-day society does not call for another and different

political organization. In the Fascist experiment, the outwards forms of popular representation subsist. There is a Chamber which is still elected by universal suffrage, and a Senate which is partly to be elected, instead, by the legally-recognized Fascist Corporations. But, at the same time, the powers of the Government are so increased that it becomes the real arbiter and ruler over every other power of the State. The figure of a Head of the Government, dominating the legislative assembly without being responsible to it, and holding Office at the King's pleasure, was not altogether unknown in the Europe of the last century ; it is sufficient to recall Bismarck and other German Chancellors. But there is a substantial difference in the fact that no German Chancellor had a militia of his own, while the Fascisti have ; that the power of German Governors reposed not on parties but on the higher bureaucracy and the rigid organization of the State, while that of the Fascist Head of the Government reposes on a party to such an extent that the party has become identified with the Government. So that whereas, under the old parliamentary systems, the Monarchy, in the exercise of its prerogative of choosing the Head of the Government, had to take into account, as in Italy, the majority in the Chamber and in the country, and, as in Germany, the bureaucrats and army chiefs, it has to consider, under the new Fascist system, the spirit and attitude of a single party and of its armed forces.

To-day this party calls itself monarchical, yesterday it proclaimed its republican tendencies : who knows what it will be to-morrow ?

In view of this circumstance the present Italian phase cannot even be compared to that of France under Napoleon III. The latter, whatever his methods, succeeded in becoming at one and the same time Head of the State and Dictator and the really responsible head of the Government ; while, in Italy, a non-responsible and strictly constitutional Monarchy subsists side by side

with a responsible and wholly dictatorial Head of the Government.

Is this to be the future type of the modern State, the goal towards which the nationalist and anti-democratic currents tend ? It would be too hybrid a combination, lacking the rational legitimacy which a people cannot do without. It seems strange that the people should feel the need for at least an appearance of legitimacy, of what is known in law as the *titulum coloratum*. But so it is. A merely apparent legitimacy will sometimes serve the purpose, but no Government and no power can stand without some such justification. And the Fascisti themselves have frequent recourse to the system of the *titulum coloratum* when, in order to justify themselves, they invoke the 'rights of revolution'. They cannot, however, justify the hybrid and the equivocal, which do not correspond to the clear and simple logic in the nature of things, and therefore cannot give force to the principle of legitimacy. And the hybrid and equivocal consist in this : that the present Fascist system means the co-existence of the law, represented by the Government, and violence, represented by the Party ; of the Constitution, represented by the constitutional Monarchy, and the dictatorship, represented by 'Il Duce' ; of the Army, the expression of the force of the Nation, and the Militia, the expression of the force of a Party ; of Parliament as an organ of free popular expression, and the suppression of the free Press and of the right of association and meeting, as a means of control over Parliament and Government. There is such intrinsic contradiction between the two terms that their co-existence is not possible, unless one of the two loses all substance, leaving a body without life, an appearance, not a reality.

To-day the conflict between the two contradictory terms has been avoided, because one of the two, cannot, will not, or finds it inconvenient to react and assert itself, or else it has come no longer to have any vitality, that is, it has become a political nonentity.

From this point of view Russia is more advanced than Italy, mainly because the dualism between the old and the new was avoided, owing to the fact that the whole of the old framework was thrown down and a fresh one built up. The new framework, moreover, is despotic and bureaucratic like the old ; and though a form of elections has been added, it is a question of an external form without reality. The new Penal Code even goes so far as to consider it an offence to express a desire for change in the Soviet Republic. There is none of that substratum of liberty which gives electoral activity value and efficacy.

The Italian dualism between the form, which is still that of a constitutional monarchy, and the substance, which is a dictatorship, does not exist in Russia. There exists a form of workers' and peasants' electorate, which, though it should in itself express an independent and personal trend of thought, and hence a dualistic tendency, has identified itself in practice with the Communist Party.

And the Italian Fascisti would go further still. 'Just as all Italians are Catholics, so ought they all to be Fascisti!', and 'Whoever is not a Fascist is not a good Italian !' are current phrases, to be heard in their speeches and read in their papers. How such a transformation in the mind and soul of a people could be achieved is not clear ; the problem is no longer political, but psychological. But the Fascisti conceive it rather as a political problem—that of eliminating rival interests and dualities whether in the life of institutions or in the workings of Government or in the collective conscience.

In order to do this they must bring about what has come to pass in Russia, that is, that even in economics there should be this suppression of opposites, and elimination of dualistic forces. In Russia this has been achieved by means of Communism. Though there is no lack of reports and accounts of the Russian situation, no exact data are to be had on the new economic structure which has arisen out of the Communist experiment. It is known that much had

to be modified in the first construction, and that continual modifications go to show the inevitable trend of an economic *régime* towards private property and towards the recognition of the economic rights of human personality. However this may be, Russian Bolshevism to-day is the expression of a particular economic experiment that has found suitable ground in the pre-capitalistic and feudal structure of Russia. Hence the dualism of the old structure was abolished, by confiscation and the absolute triumph of the proletariat, that is, of a single economic class. And the new dualism, which cannot fail to arise from the Communist experiment, will corrode the present Bolshevik political system and thus determine the formation of various economic classes.

Under this aspect the Russian Revolution has more resemblance to the French Revolution than to Fascism.

But even Italian Fascism must represent in its own way a redistribution of wealth, an important change of which it is a product or, better still, an expression. Up to this point our investigations have shown us how Fascism has gradually come to be the exponent of the most active and speculating Conservative forces. Its financial and economic policy corresponds to the claims of this class which, indeed, directs Fascist policy as a whole. The elimination to-day of political opponents does not mean a true economic elimination, which would not be possible, but it means the stifling or the suppression of those that could polarize the forces of economic opposition, the consumers, the workers, the artisan and professional classes and the small investors. Under this aspect Fascism continues the tradition of Italian Conservatives from the period of national unification up to the present day, a tradition, that is, of economic conservation in the guise of political revolution. The general atmosphere of the *Risorgimento* was Liberal, and the Conservatives were Liberal after their fashion ; the general atmosphere of *trasformismo* was democratic, and the Conservatives were democratic after their fashion ; the general post-war

atmosphere has been National-Fascist, and the Conservatives are National-Fascist after their fashion.

This fact is connected with the various causes of the inferiority of Southern Italy and the rural classes—the most numerous and the least sensitive to political currents—so that when one speaks of the important part played by Conservatives in Italian politics, one refers always to those of Upper Italy and of the more advanced part of Central Italy, who form the real centre of political dominion, as they constitute the real organized economic force.

Fascisti and others will say that this synthesis does not correspond to the truth, and that it is inaccurate to conceive of Fascism as a mere conservative current, above all since it has become syndicalist and has organized the Workers' Corporations, to which it is giving considerable political importance.

The answer to this is clear and conclusive: If the Corporations were to be the expression of an economic conception, independent, and standing by itself, there would grow up automatically an economic dualism between it and the wealthy classes, and this would mark the end of Fascist 'totalitarianism' and the renewal of political dualism; the latter would come about either through the method of liberty, or through forms of violent opposition such as revolution or revolt. But if this does not happen, it means that the Fascist Corporations are not organisms with a life of their own, but depending from another force which to-day prevails. Actually, they depend upon the Fascist Party.

The Fascist Party, in its turn, declares that its aim is to develop the economic and productive forces of the country within a higher synthesis, the Nation. Which means that the Fascist Party, or Government (for they form, in reality, one and the same thing, and moreover, consider themselves the concrete essence of the Nation), will act as the exponent of economic currents and interests, and form, from time to time, a synthesis of rival forces. This means that Party and Government will seek to hold in hand the economic

interests of the country and turn them to the advantage of their political power. It is clear that, if the game is to succeed for any length of time, it can only do so in so far as the combined Government-Party becomes actually the expression and hence the guardian of the interests of the side economically strongest.

In these conditions, unnatural and contrary to economic laws (which have their rhythms and their own requirements), it may happen that, for a certain time, the dualism of interests can be eliminated or, better, neutralized, and that one side, the weaker, may have no means of asserting itself in the political field by which the economic field has become so unduly overshadowed. However, since dualism is in the nature of things and cannot be suppressed—or for long coerced—it will inevitably rise again and re-assert its rights with all the more vehemence the longer the coercion and the graver its consequences.

This is the Achilles heel of both Italian Fascism and Russian Bolshevism, rendering them vulnerable precisely in their pretensions to eliminate the rivalry of economic interests and to bring them by force into the grip of the dictatorial system.

§ 38. *Abnormal Phenomena*

The question that to-day interests the dispassionate observer is when and what will be the end of two *régimes* so foreign to the average mentality of Europe or America, and whether any of their innovations will outlive them, and remain as an element of fresh experience in the political *régimes* of civilized peoples.

We have no intention of making any definite forecast, far less a prophecy (which would exceed human capacity), but only a political and historical enquiry such as forms a legitimate part of practical politics, given the natural tendency of men and parties to realize their ideas and aspirations.

Now it is not possible to consider the two *régimes*, the Russian and the Italian, as completely self-contained, removed from outside interference and without influence. Even Russia, with that immensity that makes her an Asiatic rather than a European State, cannot remain isolated, but seeks to extend her influence beyond her frontiers. Her relations with the West are not a few to-day, and will be more to-morrow ; she has been obliged to come into contact with the other European powers, to enter into agreements, to create an atmosphere and a possibility of co-existence, which will certainly affect her own *régime*. And if the Bolsheviks thought yesterday that they could attempt the Bolshevization of Europe, to-day they see that this dream is less likely to be fulfilled than that of the gradual albeit limited westernization of Russia.

Fascist Italy has attempted a reverse process. In the beginning it was declared that Fascism was not 'an article for exportation'. Then, as time went on, it was felt that this attitude was leading to isolation and the idea arose of a Fascist International. The proposal up till to-day has gone no further, but the various foreign Fascisms, although having no real community of interests with Italian Fascism, consider the latter as their prototype, only with differences of time, place and ends. The Conservatives and Clericals of every country pay considerable heed to the Italian experiment and defend it from the attacks of adverse currents. All this does not mean that Europe is turning Fascist, but simply that present conditions do not allow that the *régime* of a modern State should remain an isolated phenomenon without influence abroad, or that it should complete its cycle without either becoming general or failing.

And since we believe that Europe and America, that is to say, modern and civilized States, are taking a road other than that of Italian Fascism or Russian Bolshevism, we believe also that these two phenomena, in spite of attempts to make them general, are and will remain exceptions. We shall expound further this manner of appraising the trend

of modern States in the third part of the present work. Here we are assuming it as a self-evident fact which, moreover, corresponds to the present general opinion of civilized peoples. We rule out, therefore, all possibility either of the Bolshevization or the Fascistization of Europe.

If this is so, it seems to follow that both these abnormal *régimes* will either collapse or be transformed, for the closed-in economic system, and the closed-in polity that is its expression, cannot stand for long without feeling the reaction, more or less strong, of other polities and other economies : the law of communicating vessels is not only a law of physics but also of morals and culture.

Two points may be urged against this summary conclusion. The first is historical : In the Nineteenth Century despotic Russia and Turkey remained refractory to the parliamentary methods adopted by all the rest of Europe ; yet the former, in particular, played a notable part in European politics and could become the ally of that most democratic of the Great Powers, France. The answer is easy. Russia and Turkey were partly European and partly Asiatic ; their economic system was backward and feudal, and their share in European politics brought with it a reaction which in Russia took the form of the Duma and in Turkey of the Young Turk Party. The Great War did the rest. In any case, both were looked upon as exceptions which, after a longer lapse of time, would inevitably become permeated by Western influences. No one contemplated the ' Russification ' or ' Turkification ' of Nineteenth Century Europe. And if the example of the old Russia may also apply to the new, since economic conditions and structure have remained almost identical, it cannot apply to Italy, of which the economic structure, though mainly agrarian, is wholly Western.

The second comment is psychological : Man tends to adapt himself to existing conditions, for stability is more in accordance with his nature and instability is irksome. There is a force of inertia which hampers the penetration

of influences from outside ; this makes for the consolidation of a new *régime*, so that its disappearance, or fundamental modification, cannot come about without severe upheavals which all have an interest to avoid. On the other hand, the necessity for mutual relations between States helps to overcome any distrust that may have existed, especially in regard to the investment of capital, and this tends indirectly to the strengthening of the new *régime*, in spite of its abnormal character.

This is coming to pass in regard to Fascist Italy, and under certain aspects, in regard to Bolshevik Russia also.

The remark is just and founded on a psychological reality. Moreover, as every new *régime* has in its favour the fact of its existence, it has therefore its fascination, and will find persons and currents to favour, support and uphold it. Nevertheless, if such a *régime* remains abnormal and does not succeed in modifying the surrounding world with which it is in close and necessary touch, it must itself feel the repercussions and influence of the latter and proceed to a series of adaptations that will reveal its intrinsic crisis and inconsistency, and will thus bring to light the dualism undermining it both politically and economically—the political dualism, that is, between constitutionalism and dictatorship, and the economic dualism between the supremacy of a single class and the competition of interests.

The crises of abnormal *régimes*, which always take the form of a belated despotism, plutocratic or demagogic, nearly always resolve themselves either by revolution or war. Never, moreover, has there been a true revolution without a war either preceding or following it. The despotism of Napoleon III ended in war and defeat, and Revolution followed ; the despotism of Napoleon I came after the Revolution, and was preceded and followed by wars ; likewise the revolutions and wars for the independence and unity of Italy. Greece, Poland, Ireland, Germany, Russia, North and South America, all tell the

same story, from the second half of the Eighteenth Century onwards, that is, from the period when the real modern State came into existence.

Fascist Italy cannot remain an exception in the political structure of Europe. It cannot pretend by the spread of the Fascist gospel to turn Europe in a new direction. It cannot withhold its economy from the general rhythm of the economy of civilized States. It cannot suppress political dualism and the dualism produced by the differing economic interests of the various classes of citizens. Fascist Italy will have, therefore, to adapt itself to the world it lives in ; it must fall back on a *régime* first of tolerance, then of liberty, finally of democracy. That is, it must come to repudiate itself, although making use of the fruits of its experience. This will be a long and troublous process, unless there arise new forces to act as chemical precipitants, or unforeseen events to modify the present trend and the present appreciation of interests and policies.

In order to facilitate this inevitable process of Italian Fascism and, under other aspects, of Russian Bolshevism also, the ferment of ideas in the new and rising generation will count for much, together with proofs of character on the part of those few of the present generation who stand fast, the constant affirmation of the ideals animating other civilized peoples, and finally the greatest possible development of those economic conditions of capital and labour which, representing the dualism of forces, are also an indication of progress.

Anti-Fascism, politically stifled and reduced to nothing, will renew itself in its natural course in the field of culture, of morals, of religion and of economy, in order to rise again, when its hour strikes, with renewed strength. To-day there has not been a sufficient lapse of time to dissipate illusions and allow the ripening of events. Anti-Fascism, therefore, appears to the public either a return to a past that ended with the collapse of the old political class, or a drawing towards Socialism or Communism, which conflict with the

general conditions of the country. In reality, it is neither the one nor the other ; but since there is to-day neither an effective intellectual movement nor a steadfast collective conscience, time must help in this task of revision which, in Italy, cannot and will not fail to come to pass.

Even the masses are waiting. Consciously or unconsciously they are waiting, and the people do not feel the tranquillity which comes with the conviction that the *régime* is stable or suitable to the conditions of the country. There is a dim feeling that the present state of things cannot last, what with the multiplication of reforms, the constant stream of new laws, and the sounding of the alarm at every small hitch, at the slightest sign of opposition or conflict. It is a period of mutual suspicion and distrust ; and with suspicion and distrust even thrones and dynasties cannot stand. . . .

To-day Fascism is victor and sure of itself, so that it can exclaim with its chief : ' We don't care a straw for consent ! We have risen by a revolution, and anyone who would conquer us, must oppose muskets to muskets ! ' This idea of civil war is ruled out by the constitutional parties of anti-Fascism, which include the Popolari, at the same time as all attempts at conspiracy and all exercise of violence. The vitality of ideas and the requirements of reality are stronger than armed attempts or risings.

In 1848, after the failure of the Revolution, the defeat of Novara in the war against Austria, and the return of the old governments, the majority of Italians believed that the despotic *régimes* would remain changeless and strong. But, ten years later, the new Italy found herself again and fulfilled the dream of the Risorgimento.

To-day, in the torment of a dictatorship that has superseded an already tottering political class, is the time for the ripening of the germs of a second Risorgimento, in which Italy shall reconquer her freedom and realize a true democracy. For, in spite of everything, and to-day more than ever, the trend of the Modern State is towards Democracy.

PART III

CHAPTER X

THE TREND OF EUROPE

§ 39. *The Problem*

IN order fully to understand the particular phase of Italian life to-day expressed in the dualism between Fascism and Anti-Fascism, it is well to consider the general state of mind and political trend of Europe.

When the Wilsonian ideals triumphed, while the Central Empires, symbols of bureaucratic and military oligarchy, fell, and Russia had already dethroned the Tsars and carried Lenin in triumph, the state of mind of Europe inclined towards the most advanced democracy. Even the industrial classes turned towards democracy, as if in the hope of securing its favours and tempering its ardours. All this worked as ferment among the masses. In the vanquished countries more than anywhere the masses had felt the full hardships of the war and now reacted against the political forms in which power had been exercised, and against the men and classes responsible for hindering the urge towards revolution.

This state of mind was widespread even in the victorious countries, and especially in Italy. In Chapter II we have seen how it evolved, and the nature of the peace crisis which culminated in, and was most strongly felt at the Paris Conference. While the peoples thought to realize the postulates of democracy in their widest and most effective sense, the Conference put into practice the postulates of nationalism and reaction, under a veneer of pacifist and democratic ideology. Capitalist interests made firm alliance with nationalist interests and, as a result, democracy

correspondingly degenerated into demagogy. The outbreak of conflict, not only theoretical but practical, in the internal ordering of each individual State, in public economy and in international policy, could not and did not long delay.

The economic crisis was the most tangible and impellent. It is an historical axiom that, by the dispersion of wealth, wars and their aftermath determine a swift and considerable concentration of fortunes in a few hands. The rise of prices and the depreciation of money are concomitant phenomena which must run their course, dragging entire classes and entire populations to ruin. This phenomenon creates two states of mind: one, rebellious and unstable, in the masses; the other, reactionary and grasping, in the wealthy classes. Both resolve themselves into political orientations in all their complex national and international significance. The three problems set by the Great War: international peace, the economic crisis, and the political *régime*—inextricably linked and entangled as they are—have troubled European life and renewed the conflict between pacifist-international democracy on the one hand, and nationalist-conservative reaction on the other.

In Germany the conflict between the democratic and nationalist currents took the form of partial or total resistance to the peace treaties. The partisans of partial resistance aspired to see Germany restored and pacific, while the partisans of total resistance wished to see her restored and ready for revenge. In France the two currents were agreed on the need for security, which some hoped to attain by means of suitable international guarantees, and others by an almost perpetual reduction of the efficiency of Germany through military and economic coercion. The effects of these international standpoints upon domestic politics are that the German nationalists dream of a restoration of the Empire on the monarchical principle with a militarist Prussia dominant over all Germany, while the French nationalists agitate for an absolute monarchy,

an oligarchic or dictatorial *régime* after the Fascist pattern, and a close union with the Church based on a clerical conception—in short, for an anti-democratic reaction. It is natural that the Democrats of Germany should support the Locarno Pact and declare the constitution of Weimar to be fundamental and that the French Democrats should also praise Locarno and, in spite of the leaks in the Cartel des Gauches, continue to incline towards the Left.

Even England, after the experiment of a Labour Government, is suffering from the effects of a Conservatism which, for fear of workers' movements believed to be inspired by Moscow, would pursue a policy of reaction. The English mind, however, does not take kindly to such ventures—though, in her instinctive insularity England fears lest the European Continent and Russian Bolshevism should disturb overmuch the difficult conditions of her post-war economy and of her Asiatic possessions and protectorates. But these very English Conservatives, when in power, do not dream of changing the constitution, and to them is due the merit of achieving the Locarno Pact. In England, the conflict between Democracy and Conservatism is waged in the economic field where matters have reached a critical stage.¹

¹ The General Strike in sympathy with the miners has above all shown the strength of England's moral structure, and the firmness of faith in the British constitution. It has also served to disillusion the masses on the economic efficacy of any such 'workers' mobilization'. The General Strike is a political and not an economic weapon; it may serve simply as a demonstration, when it is limited beforehand to one or two days, or it may become a revolutionary weapon aiming at a change of *régime*. It has been said and written that the Trade Unions acted under the influence of Moscow, with revolutionary aims, but this accusation is only polemical. It was believed that the General Strike would prove a means of forcing the Government and public opinion to agree to the workers' demands; after the masses had for years been taught to believe in the General Strike for economic ends, it was psychologically impossible to prevent its happening. The experience of May, 1926, however, will prevent any talk in future of the General Strike as a means of resolving the economic conflict.

Belgium, after various experiments, went towards the Left and to-day the Socialists are in the Government.

The same antagonistic currents assert themselves even in the States that have superseded the Hapsburg Monarchy, as well as in Poland and the ex-neutral States, according to varying local circumstances. Spain, owing to internal difficulties, has fallen under a military dictatorship ; conditions in the Balkans and in Turkey are the least akin to those of the rest of Europe, but are not less disturbed or difficult on that account. Of Russia and Italy we spoke in the preceding chapter.

Thus, seven years after the Armistice and after a breeze of democratic ideals, Europe has seen post-war vicissitudes re-state a problem she thought already solved—that of the choice between *Democracy* and *Reaction*.

It should be noted that the conflict is not between Democracy and Absolutism—as a *régime*, Absolutism has vanished from the whole of Europe nor can it longer find the dynastic or economic elements to enable it to return to the political stage—but between Democracy and Reaction ; and by Reaction we mean the tendency towards the restriction of popular power and political liberty, towards an oligarchic revolution in the name of ‘the Nation’. This conflict between Democracy and Reaction is of fundamental importance in the international sphere. The stronger current of life running to-day through States and permeating their every activity, quickens the nationalistic ideologies which have replaced the old dynastic Myths by the Myth of ‘the Nation’. We are in the presence of an active reaction, active not in so far as it seeks to conserve but in so far as it seeks to destroy ; not in so far as it rests on an existing right to be defended, but in so far as it wishes to annul the existing rights of the people. Reaction has therefore the character of a revolution of the Right which would instal an anti-democratic order for the benefit, not of an absolutism invoking Divine Right, but of an oligarchy invoking the rights of ‘the Nation’.

A psychological factor in reaction is the fear of Bolshevism, which is itself reaction, though of the Left ; but the real cause lies in the effects of the Great War, which by the defeat of one of the belligerent parties, marked the end of the European Balance of Power. The balance will be restored. As disturbed waters tend always to return to the level, so the international forces disturbed by the war, playing alternately one upon the other, tend to regain their equilibrium. Feelings of rancour, hatred, fear, oppression, and pride, are war-legacies swollen by an unreal peace. The selfishness represented by huge gains, capitalistic exploitation and big trusts, has been able to turn to account the distress of the peoples, to the disquietude and painful bewilderment of all, and in such manner that what appears as democracy is not seldom reaction, and what appears as reaction may sometimes even be democracy. Strange mirage ! Like the Fata Morgana which, on the Straits of Messina, shows reflected and as though suspended in the sky now one now the other of the two beautiful cities on the shores. But apart from the accidental causes that blur the lines of the phenomenon, the conflict lies between democracy and reaction, and, for this reason, in view of present realities, a thorough-going revision of both old and new ideologies appears inevitable.

§ 40. *The Economic Struggle*

Now we are asked : Whither goes Europe ? Towards a democratic revision of her institutions so as to adapt them to the new situation, or towards reaction which, overthrowing democratic institutions, will set States on the road to dictatorship ? In order to appreciate the problem in its bearings and effects it is necessary to take into account not only the causes which produced it but also those determining its development. Without wishing to fall into historical materialism—on the contrary, recognizing the

full efficiency of moral causes—it is impossible to deny that the very industrial plutocracy that has enabled recent nationalisms to develop, is debarred by its own will to dominate and its international character from throwing itself into the arms of reaction. Industrial plutocracy needs equilibrium between economic and political forces in order to exist and develop ; its stability and continuity cannot depend on the mere pleasure of those in power, and it must be able to work unperturbed by personal or dynastic pretensions. Dependence upon the capricious will of one man, were he a Napoleon or a Bismarck, might put Europe back economically more than a century, while the lack of legal continuity and stability would render precarious the situation even of big industry. Nor is it credible that any capitalistic oligarchy could long withstand the conflict of interests among the plutocrats themselves, or the hostility of masses constrained to undergo a two-fold domination and exploitation, political and economic. Whoever dreams of an economic system walled in by national barriers and upheld by a dominant caste is thinking of the feudal system. But, in the days of the feudal system, the most specific elements of the present age were lacking, that is to say, big industry, rapid exchanges, the prevalence of international economic interaction, and the resulting wide solidarity of interests.

The three economic forces to-day developing more and more in the Modern State—Industry, Agriculture, and Labour—need inevitably to co-exist in a state of equilibrium ; for while each of these forces has been gaining in consistency and hence in independence of organization, the growing interaction of their reciprocal interests has rendered them increasingly interdependent. It is true that, in various places and at various times, each of the three has sought to gain the upper hand of the others (and here lies the Socialist phenomenon), but in an historical process the elimination of contest (as in Russia and Italy) cannot be other than transitory and abnormal, while the

tendency towards co-existence and equilibrium, albeit through conflict, is in the very nature of things.

But how can there be at once co-existence and contest, a tendency towards equilibrium and a temporary prevalence of one or the other, if the suppression of liberty allows power to be monopolized by a single one of the three economic forces? Such a political monopoly must mean the end of their free play. Now, in such a case, which of the three would be capable in Europe to-day of concentrating in itself all public authority, to the exclusion of the other two? The reactionary nationalists seek to exclude the Labour movements, qualified as Socialist or Christian Democratic (the Popolari and the like), and believe that they can unite in reaction agrarian and industrial interests under a more or less plutocratic aspect. They do not, however, set the problem clearly, for they seek a political monopoly over and above the co-existence of the three economic forces, denying only that these should find a form of political expression outside or in rivalry with their own, which, for their part, they identify with the nation. Hence, in logical sequence, comes first of all the seizure of power even by force (in Italy, the March on Rome; in Spain, the military 'pronunciamento'; in Bavaria, the attempt of Hitler and Ludendorff); then the modification or suppression of every representative power, central or local, and dictatorial centralization (Mussolini—De Rivera); then, to hinder any opposing movement, the formation of party troops (the Fascist Militia in Italy), or the identification of the Army with the State (the Spanish military dictatorship); and finally, so as to regulate relations with the three economic forces, State interventionism and the monopoly of Labour representation (the Fascist Corporations in Italy). We have studied, in the preceding Chapter, this phase of economic involution of which the aim is to eliminate dualism of interests; we have seen that, in this phase, a political predominance inevitably becomes an economic predominance—in Russia, in favour

of the proletariat and, in Italy, in favour of Capitalism. In Russia we have to do with an experiment which, outgrowing the Communist infatuation, is developing on the lines of State Socialism ; in Italy we have to do with an experiment which, outgrowing the capitalist infatuation, falls back on the conception of State paternalism. It is well to note that the Russian ventures have taken place in a country economically backward, and that nevertheless, in the agrarian sphere of economy peculiar to Russia, the experiment has lost intensity while a special type of private property is in course of formation. Nor can Italy, though her industry is young and localized, long endure a paternalist policy. She will feel the need for the free play of economic forces, and this will react on political conditions. Despite economic crises, the great European centres, England, France and Germany, have interests too vast to allow them to fall either into State Socialism, under a dominant proletariat, or into State paternalism, under a dominant capitalism ; either would paralyse a great part of their economic system and result in a profound convulsion.

State paternalism corresponds to an economic system prevalently agrarian, to an industry in its infancy, to home craftsmanship and unorganized masses. This does not mean that there was no economic equilibrium in the period of the classic paternalism of the Eighteenth Century. There was a special economic equilibrium and, when it was overthrown, came the revolutions—the French Revolution first, and then others throughout Europe, giving birth to big industry and economic liberalism.

To-day, after the war, what is to be the great economic innovation ? On the one hand we have a greater solidarity of big interests—the Coal Kingdom, Petroleum Kingdom, Gold Kingdom, the Kingdoms of other raw materials ; there is a more intense and vital solidarity between Europe and North America—the latter has accumulated the major portion of wealth and cannot but return it to Europe in

the form of loans and investments. On the other hand, we have the various workers' Internationals: Amsterdam (Socialist), Moscow (Communist), Utrecht (Christian Democrat or Social-Christian)—which redouble their activities and seek to gain predominance.

Between these two tremendous forces is the land (*alma parens frugum*), which through agriculture feeds the people, creates the savings—which go largely into industry—and tends to become industrialized.

The problem to-day is the search for the new equilibrium that shall enable these three forces to co-exist in the widest and most active immediate development; for, by a natural law, even the economic world seeks to repair war-havoc and to resume work on the largest possible scale. In order to attain this end, some call for a dictator to suppress post-war political ferments, and demand a Mussolini at every oscillation of parliamentary institutions and at every Government crisis as, for instance, in Belgium and France where the Left has now the upper hand. Others believe instead that economic contests and political crises together help to develop vital germs for the future, and that to impede them means retrogression, delay, and the accumulation of destructive forces bound, sooner or later, to explode.

To-day the political class sees the chief cause for anxiety in the proletarian movements which, after the war, were all confounded under the name of Bolshevism. Fear of Bolshevism is an illness, like influenza; it must pass. Here more, there less, it finds its victims; it is clear that those with the weakest constitutions most readily succumb. Italy has felt the contagion more than any other country because, as we have seen, her political class was already in a state of crisis. This is not an arbitrary explanation nor a mere phrase, as we believe we have shown in Chapter III. There are people in England and in France, and in England perhaps more than in France, who while applauding Fascism affirm that, as far as their own countries are concerned, the Italian experiment is unnecessary. In this

they pay no compliment to Italy, whom they describe, by implication, as a country without discipline ; but they affirm a very striking point of difference. In England, and in France and Germany likewise, there is a political class that still resists and fulfils its task, that adapts itself to new requirements with more or less ease and resignation and which, while it must perforce yield a part of its power in order to make room for the new forces coming forward, will never allow power to be taken from it violently, either by Nationalist Right or Communist Left. For it seeks to maintain, in the '*régime* of liberty', a certain equilibrium in both the economic and the political field. A March on London or a March on Paris or a March on Berlin, in spite of the strong forces in play, does not seem possible.

Maybe, fear of Bolshevism will inspire not a few errors on the part of the political classes in these countries, and reactionary movements, whether in the form of Die Hards or of German Nationalists or of the '*Action Française*' and the '*Faisceau*', may have moments of success in the political field ; but they will not be able to attain either political dictatorship or economic monopoly without a vast crisis in the political class now in power. And this does not appear likely.

But is there any real Bolshevist peril in Europe ? In a speech to the Senate, Mussolini has denied that there is any real Bolshevist peril in Italy, and he spoke truly ; but neither was there such a peril in the years of greatest torment, from 1919 to 1920. This peril cannot exist in Western Europe or America, for these have an advanced economic structure, and communism is a phenomenon of backward economy ; it cannot exist because the various social classes have gained an indestructible personality, and because the modern State is a political organism with forces that react against attempts at domination.

What may logically be deduced from our study up to the present point is this : That the development of the present economic structure and the needs revealed in the present

crisis demand a revision of existing political institutions in order to reach a more suitable economic equilibrium—not the suppression of the play of economic forces, nor restrictions to the method of liberty, but adaptation and further development.

When, after the Napoleonic wars, the Holy Alliance wished to restore in full the absolute Governments and to wipe out every trace of Liberalism by their police *régime*, they believed that the Restoration was complete and lasting and that every attempt at upheaval must fail. They did not see that the abolition of feudalism and of the close corporations, and the beginnings of big industry, led precisely to the representative and Liberal *régime*. The Restoration collapsed and constitutional Liberalism triumphed. Thus, to-day, nationalist reaction may for a while delude itself with the belief that it can, by dictatorship, debar present economy from the wider liberty it needs in order to regain its equilibrium ; but this experiment, if made, will fail like the Restoration. Whether it be made or not will depend as much on the capitalist classes as on the political currents in each State, and thus on an exact appreciation of the interests of Labour and of the aspirations of the parties concerned. Now in England, in Germany, even in France, and elsewhere, where the Labour leaders or Socialists have either themselves formed Governments, or held office in middle class governments, or else helped to make up government majorities, they have proved themselves able to assist, with more or less ability, in the development of the present economic structure, without bringing about that cataclysm which, some years back, would have been feared. And it is a fact that the Utopian Socialism of half a century ago is disappearing, and that certain phrases which yesterday caused a shudder, like ‘nationalization of mines’, or of railways, or ‘workers’ control’ or ‘workers’ co-partnership’ or ‘capital levy’, arouse less alarm to-day and are looked upon with a greater sense of technical reality. The same thing happened

over half a century ago, when the mere idea that the working masses might form vast associations set Conservatives and Liberals trembling from head to foot. To-day the words 'workers' trade union' are accepted as indicating a recognized right and a respected fact that has already entered into the stream of present society.

Why should people fear a real collaboration, moral, economic and political, between the working classes and the capitalist classes on a basis of liberty? Why should they believe that this ideal to-day no longer holds good in view of the realities of life, or that they must choose between reaction of the Right on the Fascist model, and reaction of the Left on the Bolshevik model?

Who compels Europe to take up this uncomfortable position, and stand like Hercules at the cross roads?

§ 41. *The Moral Currents*

If from the study of the economic structure of Europe we turn to the moral structure and ideals of European society, we find that the prevailing tendency is to avoid both of the two extremes above-mentioned. It is true that nationalist ideals, the product of lively egoism in individuals and classes, especially among the rich, find fertile soil in post-war passions; but other sentiments, such as justice, peace, the brotherhood of classes and of peoples, are widely diffused in present-day society and, after the immense carnage of the war, they too find favourable ground. And even if some forms of pacifist extremism overstep reasonable bounds, the moderate tendency which appeals alike to lofty feelings and to practical sense, develops increasingly as time goes on.

The seed of pacifism, sown broadcast in the minds of the people during and after the war, must germinate and grow. It cannot be choked by the thorns of hatred or crushed by the rivalry of great interests, for it corresponds to a real and heart-felt need and also to a better application

of Christianity to political life. To this end the work of the League of Nations is of an extraordinary importance. Born amid verbal lyricism and real distrust, with a defective constitution, it seemed that the League must collapse at the first onset—all the more since its value seemed to be lessened when the application of the peace treaties was transferred to other international bodies. But, happily for Europe, the pessimistic forecasts have not been realized. In spite of everything, and by exercising its powers, the League has begun to consolidate itself and give reason for hope. If the Geneva Protocol could not be ratified it was nevertheless the natural forerunner of the Locarno Pact of which it inspired several important provisions. And if the action of the League of Nations proceeds slowly and painfully in the matter of disarmament, it should be able in time and with the favour of international public opinion, to attain results of no small importance.

Undoubtedly the League of Nations is only the beginning of a more mature international organization, and its working is still clumsy and uncertain—as was clear in March, 1926, when the disputes among the various nations and the Brazilian veto, held up the admission of Germany. But every difficulty overcome marks a step forward, and every discussion increases general interest in the League.

The League of Nations must therefore be upheld by public opinion ; and if, as we believe, public opinion is truly turned towards peace, it will assuredly help to overcome both the pessimism of the hyper-critics and the antipathy of the nationalists in every country. During the last two years, under pressure from the democratic currents of England, France and Germany, many a step forward has been taken in this respect, and others will follow if the Locarno Pact is loyally carried out. The Dawes Plan and the Locarno Pact, the agreements between Italy and Jugoslavia, the settlement of inter-allied debts, and the evacuation of German occupied territory, are definite steps towards the peace and reconstruction of Europe. But they repre-

sent also negations of nationalist policies and tend to eliminate international causes of nationalism. Beneficial results will not be lacking, especially if the connection between home and foreign policy and between economic and international policy comes to be better understood. Were all the Great Powers of Europe to pursue nationalist policies under dictatorial *régimes*, by means of vast standing armies and capitalistic protectionism, we should go back to a period of European history long past, to the time when dynastic wars were the usual occupation of our forefathers, the glory of great Nations replacing the glory of great Kings.

International movements towards the appeasement of peoples have therefore a high moral value in upholding the free systems which are now reeling under the blows of nationalism. The Christian Churches cannot fail to influence the ideological currents of the present movement. Is it true that the Protestant Church in Germany, the Anglican in England, and the Catholic Church in France, Spain and Italy, are favourable to conservative reaction and to nationalist currents? From a superficial examination it would seem that they are, whenever the word 'Church' is taken to indicate only the upper hierarchies which are chiefly in touch with the wealthy and aristocratic classes, whereas the bulk of the clergy and of the Christian and practically religious laity are to be found in the lower or middle classes. But this impression is due to a circumstance outside the Churches themselves—to the fact that the greater part of religious journalism tends, almost unconsciously and for reasons not strictly political, towards conservatism and reaction.

The Catholic Church finds herself in a most difficult position: while the secularist or secularizing democracy of Catholic countries has always opposed her, the nationalists and reactionaries of France, Italy, and Spain, support her with an obvious air of protection, doubtless in order to use her for their own profit. On the other hand, all the

political parties organized by Catholics are either Christian-Democrats, like the Popolari, or tend slightly towards a certain balanced conservatism ; and they are always opposed to the nationalists and inclined rather towards pacifism. The Catholic Church declares herself above parties, supports the workers' social movements inspired by the Christian-Social doctrine (the Encyclical *De Rerum Novarum*) and, under both Benedict XV and Pius XI, has used her spiritual influence for the pacification of the peoples. The Protestant Churches, in a recent Congress, have confirmed their favourable bearing towards the League of Nations. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the democratic movements, especially on the Continent, will forsake their anti-religious bias, so that the spirit of Christianity may penetrate their institutions, and the Christian Churches may be able better to co-operate with them in seeking to solve problems which affect the life of peoples and of nations.

Another important element in favour of pacifist propaganda and the realization of the democratic spirit, is contributed by the workers' movements and the red and white proletarian Internationals. True, their nature is economic ; but not only is it impossible for such Internationals to stand aloof from politics, they have perforce to take a political line of their own. If there are anti-nationalist and pacifist currents, these are they. While it has been said that the proletarian International failed to resist the outbreak of war and that the solidarity of the workers was overcome by the feeling of patriotism, this assertion does not wholly correspond to the truth. It was an irrational pretention that any international organization, the Church not excepted, should impose a policy of its own, at variance with the sum of collective interests expressed by the States then deciding for war. The proletarian International could not be stronger than the State itself ; but this does not mean that it did not use its influence then, and will not do so to-day and to-morrow,

in order to promote a policy tending to eliminate war and to democratize political institutions.

Among the more educated classes in France and Germany and, through their influence, in other countries also, nationalist currents seem unfortunately to prevail. The reason is clear : between France and Germany the conflict has been most intense, and the cultured elements in them, formed mainly by the upper classes, have felt and feel most bitterly the effects of the struggle. These are the elements which, in France especially, falsify the spirit of Christianity on behalf of a pagan nationalism and the glorification of force. But other currents and elements, political, social and religious are not wanting.

In the press and in the intellectual classes, critics have sought to show that parliamentary institutions and the system of popular representation are outworn, that the 'immortal principles' of 1789 no longer hold good, that democracy is bankrupt, and so forth. The main flow in such criticism, which is destructive, not reconstructive, is that it confounds the principles of liberty and democracy with a given philosophical and historical conception of them as, for example, the ideas of the French Revolution, or those of Rousseau. Secondly, it tends to include in the same condemnation the ideal of democracy and the various concrete forms in which it has expressed itself at given moments ; and it saddles them with the perversities and shortcomings common to all human institutions. The conclusion goes beyond the premises, for criticism of this kind rejects any and every democratic ideal, and falls back on reaction and dictatorship, no matter whether they take a presidential form as in the cases of Mussolini and De Rivera, or be tricked out with the splendours of royalty as some people in France would fain see them.

The real problem, which affects the internal organizations of the various States, is this : Given the economic structure of Europe (as we have seen in the preceding chapter) and given the prevalence of a pacific international policy

(interpreted by the League of Nations), what is or what will be the best internal *régime* for each State?—a *régime* founded on the ‘method of liberty’ in which all classes work together under a democratic system, or a *régime* founded on the ‘method of force’ and leaning on dictatorship and economic paternalism? All this is implied in the question : *Democracy or Reaction*?

The word democracy is variously understood ; it lacks a well-defined and universal acceptance. Indeed, it is often applied to a definite party, as in the United States of America, or, in the form of ‘Social Democracy’, to the coming of Socialism to power. To avoid ambiguity, it is necessary here to define its exact meaning. Democracy, as opposed to Reaction and with regard to the present politics of Europe, means above all a *régime* of freedom for all citizens. The form may vary, but it is clear, from the experience of a hundred and fifty years, that it implies popular government, representative, not direct ; a *régime* based on universal suffrage for men and women and implying the existence of and respect for civil and political liberties.

Obviously, each people seeks to apply this generic idea of democracy according to its own traditions, habits, mentality and requirements. No concrete form is ever perfect and stable, but evolves and adapts itself. Finally, individuals and parties quicken the dry bones of political forms with their ideals and convictions.

But one thing is of fundamental importance and must be accepted by all as the basis of every political form : respect for human personality and recognition that from it spring liberty and right, as by natural law, a law which, in the eyes of believers, is the God-given sign of the high moral and religious ends of man. This the secular democracy of yesterday denied, and herein lay its mistake : this the nationalism of to-day denies, and herein lies its mistake.

May it not be possible that Europe, in the revision of her political institutions which their opponents’ destructive criticism is compelling her to undertake, should turn

towards a sounder, more reasonable, deeper conception of democracy, towards that which we love to call Christian Democracy ?

Time will show whether the efficacy of the moral currents in Europe will persist, whether her present institutions are able to withstand attack, whether the political classes of the different countries can survive the crises through which they are passing, and whether religious men and classes will have the virtue to hold out against the pagan conceptions of the State and of the Nation as the goal of mankind.

CHAPTER XI

THE ANGLO-SAXON PEOPLES

§ 42. *The Position of the Anglo-Saxons*

Is it right to speak of a special mission as having been assigned to this or that people in one age or another? There are historians and philosophers of history who speak thus with conviction, and treat these alleged missions in historical syntheses as objective realities. On examination it seems more accurate to say that, in summarizing a series of past events from a theoretical standpoint, historians are able to conclude that a given people has had its special mission. Hence it is possible to argue the existence of a law of Providence of which, though the details escape us, we may be said to have a certain approximative intuition. In this sense it may be maintained that the mission of the Jewish people was to guard the monotheistic idea amid peoples who had fallen into dualism or polytheism; that the Romans brought about a certain political and juridical unification of the known world, thus preparing the way for the expansion of the Christian religion; and so on, down to our own days.

If, however, from an historical and *a posteriori* standpoint we pass to the consideration of the present, either in itself or as a premise of the future, it is difficult to affirm that a given people has this or that special task, other than that which coincides with its own particular development, activity, genius and greatness. But the matter cannot be looked at solely from the standpoint of material and individual ends; for, as events bring to a people increased power and influence, the power of moral concepts grows

with the power of material motives, the influence of the ideal with the influence of the purely practical, the sense of general interests with the sense of particular interests. So that, albeit vaguely, there arises in the mind of a people the idea that it has a special mission, an international duty coinciding with the very circumstances of its own activity.

This consciousness of a special mission devolving upon a people or a race—the white race, for instance—is in accordance with a natural law which neither man nor people can evade. Every man, on a scale small or large, makes himself the centre of those about him and practically or mentally co-ordinates them to himself; a people, once it has attained to conscious unity, does likewise. Here is the explanation of the German idea that the Germans were the chosen people, with a perennial right to command, from the day they became the strongest race in Europe; or of the French idea of the civilizing virtue of the Great Revolution; or of the idea of the humanitarian-proletarian mission of Bolshevik Russia, and so forth. Such theories fit in with the political positions of the peoples concerned, the former contributing to the latter, and vice versa, in a combined attempt at generalization and centralization.

The Anglo-Saxons have reached international power of the highest order by the practical method of solving problems one by one as they arise, taking care to keep clear of dizzy ideologies. Yet if, unlike the Germans, they have not formed any vast theory of their own, they have not failed to recognize that certain duties must fall to them, since, on both sides of the Ocean, they have reached so great a degree of power, and since they comprise so large a section of the civilized world. And even though the collective consciousness of a people is chiefly responsive to its own needs and relationships, and does not always preserve the sense of a duty extending beyond its frontiers, there are still moments when unsuspected ideas and feelings of solidarity with the rest of humanity arise from the depths of that consciousness, imposing duties not felt at first and

directing activities towards ideal and social ends that transcend national egoisms and particular interests. Whether directly or indirectly felt, clearly or confusedly perceived, deliberately or unconsciously willed, here is a force working towards the fulfilment of a task such as we believe God to have assigned to every people of the earth. Thus it is possible to speak of the mission of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, in the same way as we may speak of that of the French or that of the Italians, Germans or Russians. Just as in Nature nothing is lost and even the flower of the field has its purpose, so in the life of every people, however small, there will always be this mission, more or less realized and appreciated. But it is better to study the great forces that synthesize many others than the lesser forces which may remain without sufficient scope.

The World War has given greater efficiency to the Anglo-Saxon peoples; it has sown the seeds of a vaster and deeper solidarity among the Nations. And if, a century ago, Canning said 'We must call in the New World to redress the balance of the Old!' to-day the European continent may well say: 'We must call in the Anglo-Saxons to pacify Europe!' As England and the United States realized in the Great War and after, the old theories of Splendid Isolation and the Monroe Doctrine, like that of Non-Intervention, no longer hold good in view of the more complicated requirements of the life of peoples. And if the United States has not wished to take part in the League of Nations, this is due to doubts not yet overcome but by no means insuperable, concerning Europe's capacity to give herself a peace; and to the prevalence of egotisms and interests that not seldom bring about a deviation from the truest perception of duty.

The feeling that the Anglo-Saxons have an international mission is spreading—to-day more effectively than before the war—among the political classes of Great Britain and the United States. Their war experience might have led them to withdraw from further contact with the volcano of

continental Europe, because unhappily that volcano is not yet extinct. But the very fact that the war rendered international relations more vital and more delicate, and revealed more clearly the peril of fresh wars and fresh disturbances, has caused efforts to converge towards an end more general and more important than the mere maintenance of the balance of power between States. All the more so since the fall of Germany, the dismemberment of Austria, the critical state of France, the Bolshevization of Russia and the Fascistization of Italy have thrown into greater relief the internal stability of Great Britain and the need for the influence of North America in Europe.

A considerable advantage to both of these unions of Anglo-Saxon States is that their rule is not based on the conquest and oppression of free and civilized peoples. The British Dominions are not kept in subjection by force. If Great Britain did wrong in the matter of the Boer War she was able to repair it, making of South Africa a flourishing Dominion. Even the Irish question has been finally solved by the constitution of the Free State, cancelling ancient errors and ancient wrongs. And, finally the Egyptian protectorate was given up at the right moment. The peoples to-day constituting the British and the American Unions of States belong to them of their free will ; it is not preposterous to believe that if Canada or New Zealand wished to form perfectly independent States, they could do so without risk of war ; the union is based on common sentiment and mutual interest, not forcibly imposed by Great Britain. Here then, are empires of a new type. The colonies and the protectorates, as they are able gradually to rise to the rank of self-governing peoples, will take their place among the Dominions ; they will thus form a fresh element of civilization and progress.

This imperial conception is new in the world. It has no parallel in any empire, ancient or modern, and it has set on foot an important process of securing for civilized peoples immunity from peril of war.

South America, gravitating naturally towards North America, has formed with the United States a kind of permanent Pan-American Congress, producing between all the States of America a prolonged and firm peace of which they may well be proud.

Great Britain, too, after the Anglo-Boer parenthesis, has formed with her Dominions a wide zone of immunity from war. It may thus be said that in the British Empire (not counting India and the Crown colonies) and the two Americas, nearly three hundred million people find themselves immune from the danger of mutual strife, under a *régime* of lasting peace, in so far as anything human can be lasting.

This peaceful condition is closely connected with the internal constitution of the Anglo-Saxon States, and with their training in the use of political liberty and civil self-discipline on the traditional and firmly established principle of self-government. This means at once liberty and self-control, a combination of individuality and authority, arising from traditions more than from the people concerned. As a result strife becomes less bitter, development is accelerated and the basis of public life is broadened.

The co-relation of these two factors, the organization of States on a system of internal liberty and the federation of States on a system of reciprocal liberty, is a sign that these vast empires are truly founded on precisely that 'method of liberty' of which we have spoken in earlier chapters—a method diametrically opposed to what must be called 'the method of force', or 'the method of dictatorship'.

This fact is in strict dependence upon the economic structure of such States, a structure based on big industry, on widely-developed trade, on great organizations of capital and labour—factors which in themselves presuppose peace and liberty. The intensity of economic life may bring about a scramble for money and a stronger sense of material interests, but it has not taken from Great Britain the love of poetry and of thought, nor has it prevented

America from hearing the call of older European culture even above the roar of her machines and the bustle of her business world. It makes these peoples more positive and less effervescent, and tones down passions, thus enhancing the general tendency towards peace.

When we consider how great a portion of the world is occupied by these Anglo-Saxon Empires and by the zones in various continents directly or indirectly under their influence, Europe—Latin, Germanic and Slavonic—seems a mixture of the Middle Ages and of Modern Times in which the good and evil germs of both periods still ferment. One of the latest forms of ferment, nationalism, seeks to reproduce within the frontiers of great States the struggle which in the Middle Ages went on within the boundaries of Communes or Counties and small and extemporized feudal kingdoms.

The fatherland, as an emotion and as a reality, tends to expand as civilization widens. In the Middle Ages the fatherland was Florence or Pisa, Genoa or Venice, and men fought and died for these names. Then the principalities grew and the first rudimentary States were created; Swabians fought against Guelfs, Provençaux against Normans, English against Scots. Then coalitions of States created national consciousness, and the fatherland became the nation. It is a far cry from the citizen of Florence or of Pisa in the Middle Ages to the Italian citizen of the Nineteenth Century. Yet even this is not enough. Man is always widening the frontiers of his world with the widening of the circle of his knowledge, of his interests, of his relations. Why should continental Europe stop at the stage of nationality, while the world progresses towards forms of greater breadth and greater human solidarity? Between the British Empire of about seventy millions and a Greece at war with Bulgaria, comprising both together barely twelve million persons, there is more disparity than between Florence and the little English kingdom of the Middle Ages. True modern relations can

be established among three coalitions of civilized peoples: the North American Confederation, with its influence on South America ; the British Empire—Mother country and Dominions—and a Confederation of the European States, to-day exclusive of Russia. The first two exist ; why should it not be possible to achieve the third, which would merge internal nationalisms into a loftier solidarity ?

§ 43. *The Task of the Anglo-Saxons*

This should be the chief and most important rôle of the Anglo-Saxon peoples in the international life of Europe : to contribute positively to the attainment of a system of confederation or association among the different States in order to establish among them a new and peaceable solidarity.

The Americans had the greatest share in the constitution of the League of Nations, an organization which should embrace all the States of the world. When it has outgrown its first tentative stage, and its duties have been better established, the League will be able to receive not only Germany but, in time, also Russia ; and it is no vain hope that the United States will end by joining it. The League of Nations is not a super-State, nor will it be able to discharge federal functions ; it will therefore have all the more chance of success as a promoter of concord and as a means of setting civilized States on the road to a permanent understanding among themselves and to a political and moral synthesis of their interests. From small beginnings Nature develops great forces, and man, imitating Nature, often cannot tell to what immense results his strivings and trials are destined to lead. In these cases it is necessary to have faith in the usefulness and goodness of the enterprise ; its fruits will follow.

Despite the nationalist excesses and the very serious errors of the Peace Conference, the mind of Europe is now turned towards true pacification and reconstruction. The

way in which the Locarno Pact was greeted even in France and Germany, the countries most directly concerned and most hostile to one another, is a clear sign that there is a change for the better and that the peoples are to-day increasingly disposed to sacrifice *amour propre* and pretended rights for the sake of an atmosphere of mutual security and tranquillity.

The Locarno Pact differs from other treaties in that it was freely negotiated, victors and vanquished meeting as peers. It was formed by converging wills whereas the Germans at Versailles had been greeted with the old cry of Brennus : ‘ *Vae victis !* ’ And even if there are defective and debatable points in its various articles, the Pact is a starting point for further peaceable understandings. It removes a danger which France, in particular, felt to be pressing—the danger that might arise from the working of the spirit of revenge on the German consciousness and pride of race.

And even if subsequent events—Germany’s failure to gain admission to the League of Nations during the Council Session of March, 1926, and the Russo-German Treaty—have cast a shadow over the Locarno Pact, it remains with the clear-sighted men in European politics, and the trend of public spirit towards peace, that the efforts and steps made should not have been made in vain. And this especially applies to Great Britain, whose part in the conclusion of the Locarno Pact was outstanding, both on account of her diplomatic action and, more especially, by reason of her guarantee of the western frontiers. It is true that in this matter England considered her own interests as principal and most legitimate ; but she thought also of the better ordering of the Continent of Europe in taking upon herself a by no means negligible burden in which, to the satisfaction of all, Italy shares.

It has been rightly said that the spirit of the Locarno Pact is the spirit of the Geneva Protocol. Such a spirit cannot remain shut up within the provisions of Locarno,

but must permeate the succeeding work of the League of Nations. The Geneva Protocol also bore the British hall-mark, and in this important period of European life the name of Mr. MacDonald cannot be dissociated from that of Mr. Chamberlain. A new step forward is an historical necessity which only the blind and the passion-driven fail to see : whoever stands still goes back, says the proverb, for the world goes on. Now it is not possible to halt on the positions of Locarno. Developments are natural and indispensable.

What developments? Those known as arbitration—disarmament—economic understandings—free trade—European Confederation. These ends the Anglo-Saxon people can promote and uphold with greater authority, fuller efficiency and, perhaps, more disinterestedness than other nations. This is no disparagement of the pacific currents in other countries, nor of the moral efficacy of the Christian Churches and especially of the Catholic Church. On this point we dwelt in the last Chapter. Rather do we affirm that the work of outside influences would be rendered impossible unless the people most directly concerned possessed sufficient psychological preparation and suitable political *régimes*. Only by the initiative and effective co-operation of the Anglo-Saxon peoples can these ends be wholly or partially attained ; and by upholding these high ideals British public opinion may determine a considerable advance in the public opinion of other countries, including the two most important and most directly involved, France and Germany.

In speaking of disarmament and international arbitration we speak of nothing new : these are precisely the objects of the League of Nations. The Washington Conference for the limitation of naval armaments was a first and by no means useless step which must be followed by others more courageous. There must come to be a control of the manufacture and sale of arms, and it should be possible to prevent the supply of arms to uncivilized peoples or those in a

permanent state of war amongst themselves. But the boldest step for Europe would be the limitation of standing armies so as to do away with the type of the armed State which some have tried to make the true type of the national and modern State.

The theory that the armed organization of a State and of a people is the sign of its greatness and the result of its higher culture and moral, political and economic development—a theory which has been brought back into fashion since the war—is not only an error of historical perspective but represents a moral twist that would make a dogma of the cult of force. People are slow to understand that the system of organized force, whether defensive or offensive, must give way to the system of organized human solidarity ; that disarmament and arbitration are the most suitable legal methods, and a Confederation of States the most practical political form.

The League of Nations exemplifies these truths and makes for permanent mediation. But something more intrinsic is needed to overcome the stage of human civilization which relies overmuch on armaments and wars ; that is, we must reach a state of mind conducive to harmony and balance among the peoples, a state of mind that has a moral value of exceptional importance. It seems to be more widespread among the Anglo-Saxon peoples, and if this is so they have a considerable advantage over the others.

In this broad review of the task of the Anglo-Saxon peoples there are certain doubtful points, first among them being the economic question and that of emigration. The Anglo-Saxon peoples now hold the greatest wealth of the civilized world, wealth that has been transformed into realized or realizable and exchangeable goods. This gives them a position almost of world hegemony and therefore urges them towards an economy as self-contained as possible. The tendency towards protection prevails in America, the British Dominions are distinctly favourable to it and Great Britain is, at least temporarily, leaning towards

it. Without wishing to attribute to Free Trade the virtues of a panacea, one cannot see without uneasiness this haste to raise customs barriers and to increase the cost of living at a time when the population of the earth, thanks to higher standards of living and to hygienic measures, is steadily on the increase. It is interesting to study the phenomenon of over-population in relation both to the costs of living and to emigration.

All the civilizations of the world are connected with migratory movements either from the point of view of the contact and renewal of races, or from that of balance of production, or from that of the displacement of centres of culture and power.

Emigration is one of the fundamental laws of human society, of its ends, of its progress. It may be regulated, as civilizations gradually develop, but it cannot be prevented. As well might one wish to stay the flow of waters ; they swell, flooding the fields, tearing asunder mountains, cleaving gullies, and then subside, leaving behind them loss and ruin. A poor and numerous people that cannot draw sufficient means of life from its own soil—and cannot allow itself the luxury of keeping, like England, a million and a half unemployed out of the Public Exchequer for several years—must emigrate to other lands. The irregular movement of great masses, as in the ancient periods of the great transigrations, brings with it losses and upheavals, and does not correspond to modern conditions. But neither does the system of closed doors correspond to modern conditions. The theory of saturation is as inaccurate as the theory of the national consolidation of a certain standard of prosperity is selfish. The anti-emigration policy to-day prevailing among the Anglo-Saxon peoples, leads them toward results contrary to their own political and pacifist ideals. It is impossible to force a law of Nature without giving rise to turbulent movements, to tremendous reactions and to seeds of inevitable war.

This may seem an exaggeration, but it is logical and

natural to think that a fundamental social law, like a physical or biological law, requires to be applied in every field to which, in however slight a degree, it may refer. Thus, for example, the elimination of war among a given nucleus of peoples requires a system in which all lines converge to this end. We have seen that this end is to be achieved by the 'method of liberty'—liberty in international relations, and hence in national constitutions. But this same method of liberty must be applied also to economy if we wish to avoid economic motives of war, and likewise to emigration, if disturbances and wars are to be prevented. We do not deny that economy and emigration should be regulated; what we deny is that this regulation can form part of a prohibitionist and protectionist system, without changing the conditions of equilibrium necessary to a pacific policy.

Economic protection and prohibition of emigration belong to the method of coercion; free trade and the open door to the method of liberty. Therefore protection and anti-emigration require a militarist political structure, armed defence and struggles for hegemony.

Are the Anglo-Saxon peoples tending in this direction? Here is a doubtful point of great importance—a doubt which causes the League of Nations to be suspected of being an instrument of British policy, and the settlement of war debts with the United States to be considered as involving the control of important industrial centres in Europe by the High Finance of New York. The sympathies of certain capitalistic currents in England and America for the nationalist and Fascist *régimes* of Continental Europe, are pointed out as symptoms of this tendency towards the method of force. And this would mean that, beneath the outward forms of a pacifist policy aiming at repairing the ills of the war, Anglo-Saxon exclusiveness is helping, more or less unconsciously, to create a disturbing situation.

Another doubtful point is the almost total lack of under-

standing, on the part of certain British and American currents, of the Russian phenomenon which, by reason of its importance, should be better known.

The fear of the ' bolshevization ' of the West, which seems to have spread more or less everywhere, we have seen to be irrational. This fear, however, works in such a way that economic relations with Russia are difficult, and political relations more difficult still. Moreover, though the armed organization of Russia appears of doubtful efficiency, it seems to supply a good argument why Europe should remain armed.

That which England, and other States with colonies or zones of influence, may fear from Russia is Russian propaganda in Asia and in Africa, and the aid she gives directly or indirectly to peoples restive under Western rule. These peoples, already in a state of upheaval and anarchy, are more affected by the political mirage of Russia than by her social influence. In these zones European activity, here more, there less, is often self-seeking and anti-Christian ; the colonial peoples should be looked upon under a profoundly human aspect, and they should be guided towards a more adequate civilization. And maybe the Bolshevik ferment will not be altogether useless if it helps to bring about a better understanding of the Asiatic and African problem among the European States with colonial possessions.

In relations with Russia it is important that the idea of Anglo-Russian antagonism should be dissipated and facilities afforded to Russian economy. Here is the only means of exercising an influence in Russia, and of fostering the practical movements created by the failure of Communist economy so as to bring Russia's economic system closer to that of the West. The political problem of the entry of Russia into the League of Nations, and that of possible understandings with a view to the removal of all seeds of war, will be the more easily solved if they come as a natural consequence of internal economic evolution.

In the meantime, the agreements which Russia has concluded with Germany, Italy, and Poland are useful and significant.

Humanity will never be without its hesitations, pains, conflicts and struggles. The effort to do away with the more pressing and immediate ills and to avoid those which are feared for the future, lead to other problems and other motives of strife. Yet it is in accordance with the higher standards of humanity to carry the contest on to ever higher planes and on to grounds of ever greater reasonableness, to consider the use of force and material dominion to be less and less consonant with human ends. This is why, in the common aspiration of civilized peoples towards a lasting peace, we find the application of the 'method of liberty' alike to the internal life of States and to international relations, and the lessening and weakening of systems of coercion and force, to be to-day the decisive and practical factor. Therefore do we seek disarmament and arbitration, and while we uphold the League of Nations as a practical agency of the highest importance, we seek the ever increasing development of zones immune from the peril of war in the form of Confederations of States ; and we hope for free economic *régimes*, and especially for a Confederate and free-trading Europe.

The Anglo-Saxon peoples, overcoming racial exclusiveness and protectionism in trade and emigration, can and therefore must be among the first to co-operate effectually in the realization of this programme, which is common to all civilized peoples.

CHAPTER XII

THE PLACE OF ITALY

§ 44. *A Great Pacific Nation*

WHEN Italy was in process of unification England favoured the expedition of Garibaldi and his Thousand, and afterwards the conquest of Naples, foreseeing that Italy as a single State could be a counterpoise to the growing influence of France in the Mediterranean and would maintain the necessary balance of power. These expectations were not disappointed, and throughout the vicissitudes of foreign politics, Italian influence contributed to equilibrium and tranquillity in the Central and Western Mediterranean Basin—the scene of so many wars in the past. Equilibrium had yet to be established in the Adriatic, where elements of disturbance were inherent in the situation, though the Triple Alliance long helped to maintain the *status quo*. It was only after the Great War that Italy and the other sea-board States reached a normal position on the Adriatic as a prelude to a state of tranquillity and progress, of which Italy's treaty with Jugo-Slavia, and the regulation of the traffic of the ports of Trieste and Fiume, are the first and most important advantages.

As a result of the war Italy has attained her natural frontiers and the position that is her due on the Adriatic; the period of conflict with old Austria and with the new ex-Austrian States is thus closed. With her Libyan possessions she offers at the same time a certain counterpoise to the influence of France and England, thus fulfilling

her mission as a permanent factor in Mediterranean balance of power.

Italy is like a bridge across the Mediterranean ; on the North she is the intermediary of Central and Eastern Europe and, on the South, of the peoples dwelling on the shores of that vast basin ; these two functions give scope for the expansion of her trade and influence, and should thus more and more direct her policy. This geographical position and the ever increasing number of her inhabitants have caused united Italy to be considered a Great Power and a Sea Power. The Washington Conference of 1921 accorded her the same naval quota as France.

After the war, Italy should have discharged yet another important task in the establishment of the balance of power in Europe, that is, she should have taken her place in the inter-State system of the ex-Austrian States and should have contributed, by means of economic and tariff agreements, to make the Adriatic an important trade route to the Near East. There was talk of economic understandings, and even of tariff arrangements, and these the present writer advocated with conviction, in spite of the fact that the political errors of war and post-war Governments had been such as to render effective understandings exceedingly difficult.¹ There was no idea of securing predominance by politico-military systems, such as France has sought in her relations with these peoples, but only of economic and moral interests. The new States which gravitate towards the Adriatic and the Danube must necessarily form a unity of interests in which Italy might be a point of convergence and an element of cohesion. In the long run, the natural conditions of Trieste and Fiume and the exigencies of equilibrium among these States will oblige them to accept such a policy as advantageous for all. Whoever thinks that the ex-Austrian States can remain separated by barriers,

¹ See L. STURZO. *Riforma Statale e Indirizzi politici*. Vallecchi, Florence, 1923.

divergent in policy, and economically conflicting among themselves, is blind to the need for a strong unit that would form a buffer between Germany, Russia and Turkey, and fails to understand the need for a balance of power real and effectual, not merely formal. In time it will become necessary to choose between the union of Austria and Germany, and a Danubian Confederation. Italy, with a policy of peace and economic expansion will not only be unable to oppose such a Confederation but will find it to her advantage to extend it to the Adriatic by becoming one of its members. Do these seem to be dreams? On the contrary, they may well come to be felt as realities and necessities.

That this political scheme does not clash either with Italy's position or with that of the ex-Austrian States is clear from the fact that Italy has no inducement to seek increases of territory beyond her present frontiers. Economically such an increase could bring no serious gain, and any sentimental irredentisms that may exist have no basis in reality and can serve no purpose. Aspirations to Dalmatia cannot inspire any far-seeing Italian policy. They are, moreover, in contradiction with existing treaties. Rhetorical declamations about Dalmatia may give some verbal satisfaction to the present *régime* but neither they nor allusions to the Ticino, Corsica, Nice or Malta are to be taken seriously; they correspond neither to the states of mind of the populations concerned nor even to the real aims of present foreign policy. If among the many lands that once formed part of Italy and are now in foreign hands there is one with any real value it would be Malta; but for Italy to claim Malta would imply a political and military expansion in the Mediterranean that would upset the existing situation and plunge her into a formidable anti-British struggle. All this is outside the realm of reality. Italy after the war has ordered her frontiers and established her position so that she may be said to be the most stable and secure of all the ex-belligerent peoples. And if there

is talk of the Upper Adige as a hot-bed of irredentism, this is due less to real international conditions than to the practical errors of post-war governments, aggravated by the present Fascist offensive against every kind of local autonomy, and the just rights of a minority. Mussolini's speeches against Germany are politically nonsensical. In any case, the need for watchfulness in this quarter does not detract from the truth of the general statement that Italy, owing to her geographic and political position, is free from militarist ferment and aims of conquest, and therefore free from permanent sources of conflict, latent or declared, with any European people, least of all with the peoples of the ex-Austro-Hungarian Monarchy or with Germany. Mussolini's opposition to the union of Austria with Germany is not the expression of Italian interests, but forms part of certain political views on the European balance of power. It follows that Italy, liberated from all causes of uneasiness with regard to Austria, and from the irredentism of Trent, Trieste and Fiume, has acquired a freedom of action in European politics that makes her a factor of ever increasing importance in the balance of power, tending to temper the antagonisms which, as time goes on, may grow up between State and State.

Even Italy's limited economic resources, which are at once an incentive to work, to emigration and to trade, show ever more clearly that she cannot transform herself into a militarist State (apart from the repugnance such an idea arouses after the Great War), but must take her stand on a policy essentially pacific and making for balance. What may seem inferiority may become an advantage. Each country must take up the place which falls to it ; and, even for States, the law of proportion holds good. If the wisdom of her rulers does not fail, Italy may become the peaceful intermediary between great and small nations without arousing the jealousy of either, just as in the Mediterranean she is an intermediary between notable European interests. Her task is that which best con-

forms to the aims of the League of Nations itself ; Italy should be among the foremost in the pacific enterprises of the League, as she has been among the foremost in the reconstruction of Austria. Disarmament and arbitration, tariff agreements and free trading tendencies, correspond to Italy's real interests, to her geographical position and to her traditions. Hence they cannot but form a substantial part of her policy.

In Italy, this conception is to-day criticized as not national enough and, in opposing it, the Fascisti talk even of an 'Empire'—a word so misused that nobody now knows what it means. An Empire is not the result of a conscious effort of human will ; it is the unconscious product of peoples and of centuries. When geniuses like Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, and Napoleon I, sought to create empires after successful wars and in exceptionally favourable conditions, it was soon clear that a change in their fortunes or their death meant the immediate collapse of that which with so much labour and genius they had built up. Likewise, attempts at hegemony which are not the product of centuries and of a long series of human activities and sacrifices, can only fail like that of the German Empire. How then can one conceive an Italian Empire, save in name only, if all the conditions, even for a frail and ephemeral venture, are lacking ? The present political temperature of Fascist Italy, with the ardent exuberance of inexperienced youth, may encourage rhetorical exercises. This nationalist intoxication and these imperialist flights only show how little present European international politics are understood. The tasks awaiting Italy remain those that we have pointed out in dealing with her position as a great Mediterranean nation. And of these tasks her people and her Governments, through all vicissitudes of politics and of *régime*, are bound to seek increasingly the fulfilment, for they are in accordance with the fundamental necessities of her existence and her future. Italy is, and cannot but be, a *great pacific Power*.

§ 45. *Labour, Culture, Religion*

Three immutable circumstances which govern Italy's relations with the rest of the world accentuate her character as a peaceable nation that finds its greatness in mediation between important human currents. She stands for labour, by her emigration; for culture, by her trimillenary civilization; for religion, as the centre of Catholicism and the seat of the Papacy. It is instructive to consider at once the worker who goes through the world to live by his toil, carrying the name of Italy to the furthest regions of the earth, and the high currents of culture, art and religion, which bring the whole civilized world to take so large a share in Italian life. In many tongues the hand, the mind, and the heart speak of Italy. Not armaments but labour, not overbearing domination but culture, not empire but religion! And many draw near to the thought, the life, the heart of Italy through these three great currents, and to many it seems that they can experience the synthesis of all three in the glory of her natural beauties and of her ideal greatness.

Emigration was considered an evil for Italy. Poverty drove hundreds of thousands of her children to cross the frontiers, to furrow the ocean, with in their hearts a hope and a fear, in their eyes tears of emotion. The exodus was grievous and, for many, their Odyssey more grievous still. To-day there are American towns with hundreds of thousands of Italians and sons of Italians whose labour has made fruitful entire countries, and whose savings have for many a year helped to maintain Italy's Balance of Payments. The many millions of Italians living abroad, a strong and laborious people, have adapted themselves to every clime, to every tongue, to every kind of work. To-day they represent a remarkable current of activity, especially in the New World.

Three peoples have characteristically migrated: the Irish, the Poles, the Italians. The Irish, under pressure

New World. The former fear the slackening of the ties with the mother-country ; the latter, the presence of peoples of alien stock and character. Thus the old exclusivist selfishnesses would fain oppose the laws of nature.

Italy's emigration is irrepressible, for her population is dense and prolific and cannot be contained within her frontiers. It follows that Italy should pursue a policy of peace, of penetration, and of labour, in her relations with all nations, and at the same time strive to raise as much as possible the moral and educational standard of her citizens so that, wherever they go, they may find work, respect, and esteem.

There is a pendant to the centrifugal movement, represented by emigration, in the centripetal movement represented by the influx of people of culture and of wealth who are drawn to Italy by her history, her civilization, her culture, her beauties. Let it not appear out of place that we should speak of this in a political work ; there is immense moral value in the influence radiating from Italy through the many civilizations that she has known. They have given birth to works of art, to monuments and memories, to juridical and moral traditions, and they have made of her the most important historical centre of the world ; she is full of memories and, through the perennial revivifying thought of Christian civilization, these are not dead but living. Continual intercourse with the cultured elements, with the currents of thought and art of the whole world, makes of Italy, more than any other country, a kind of ideal centre. And this intercourse helps to render easier that spiritual unification which Western civilization has sought for more than a thousand years with one thought and one constant goal—Rome.

The unification of Italy has rendered such international intercourse easier and more continuous, opening up and developing what in the past was inaccessible and primitive and, more important still, removing motives for war among various foreign States. There was a time when Upper

Italy, especially, was, like the Low Countries, an essential strategic point in the wars of Europe.

And gone, happily, are those local figures which gave so regrettable an idea of certain parts of Italy—the invariable brigand of the Abruzzi or Romagna, the invariable *ciociari* of Rome, the Neapolitan ballad-singers and *guappi*. As though these were Italy! A hard-working people, a remarkable economic structure, an ever-increasing activity from the day Italy became a Kingdom, offer a more interesting picture of throbbing life. Side by side with artistic demonstrations and traditional popular festivals, we have displays of vigour, of strength, of will, to which the international public comes flocking—the Biennial Art Exhibition of Venice, the Samples Fair of Milan, the Motor Races of Monza.

For Italy to show that her civilization renews itself, that her vitality increases, that her contribution to the world of thought is not only past but present, and that this contribution should be in accordance with her mission of peace, is the constant aspiration which the Italy of the Risorgimento left as a living inheritance in the hearts of the Italian people.

So vast and enduring a moral and pacific function cannot be dissociated from the thought that Italy has been and is the centre of Catholicism and holds the longest and most constant Christian tradition. Millions and millions of Catholics look to Italy and Rome as the centre of their Faith, as a spiritual fatherland; the intercourse of religious men and currents from the whole world is centred in or drawn towards Rome. Even the dissenting and independent Christian currents cannot ignore Rome as the centre of culture, of power, of proselytism, and as an exceptional historical phenomenon. Rome draws at one and the same time the hosts of the faithful and the élite of the learned; hers is a task of perennial mediation, amid conflicts, collisions and strife. No Government in the world can ignore or overlook this unique organization which, for nearly

two thousand years, has been established in Rome outside and above every political or economic structure, withstanding all human hurricanes, from the persecution of the Cæsars to the Barbarian invasions, from the Byzantine or Feudal anarchy to the struggles with the German Emperors ; from the Reformation to the wavering support of absolute Kings, from the negations of the French Revolution to the onsets of Liberalism and Socialism, and to the insidious favours of nationalism and Fascism.

The mistake of a Liberal current in the Risorgimento was the belief that it could put the ' Third Italy ' above the Church and deny the moral and international position of the Papacy. But not only has the Papacy not been reduced to dependence on the Italian State, but has emerged from the phase of open hostility with its prestige intact in the religious and in the international and political world. The names of the Popes since the taking of Rome, Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV and Pius XI are names of great Pontiffs and great Italians, universally appreciated even outside the strictly religious field.

During the past half-century the moral influence of the Papacy has notably increased ; and with the subsidence of war passions the work of Benedict XV has come to be more fully appreciated.

The fact that Rome, the seat of the Papacy and spiritual centre of Catholicism, is also the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, has given rise to a diversity of moral preoccupations, political and religious studies, and diplomatic attitudes, and will continue to do so for some time yet. It is interesting to note that the Papacy has enjoyed an independence and authority recognized by the whole world, without in any way injuring or impinging upon the political independence of the Kingdom of Italy. The public consciousness of the Italians, even of those who are not, practically-speaking, Catholics, has tended more and more towards the recognition of the importance of the international mission of the Papacy, and the Papacy finds it possible to extend

its spiritual activity untouched by any external pressure either in form of favours or of threats from the public authorities or from popular factions in Italy.

All this obliges Italy to follow a delicate and exceptionally skilful policy and gives her a mission of indirect mediation among the peoples of the world ; her influence is thus of exceptional importance in the peaceful maintenance of the balance of power. The circumstance that this fact has been realized with varying intensity at different times does not detract from its truth or its significance.

When we assert that United Italy, as a national Kingdom, in the narrow and even in the selfish sense of the word, has become a more freely international centre than before her unification, we are not only stating a reality but are revealing a moral and political tendency : *Italy is and must be a pacific nation.*

And by a pacific nation we do not mean a weak nation. These are not synonymous terms. It is no more true that a peaceable nation must be weak than that a militarist nation must necessarily be strong. We maintain that by nature, history, and political development modern Italy has become a nation of which the chief function must be one of pacification, of counterpoise, of mediation, and that this consideration should determine her policy. The strong State is primarily one which is adequate to its ends, and of which the forces act in harmony ; such a state can overcome crises at home and is exposed as little as possible to conflict abroad. Thus, the conception of an Italy clad in the mail of absolute governments, flanked by armies, spurred on to hazardous enterprises, aflame with the warrior's sacred fire, is repugnant to us ; we find ourselves wholly at a loss to understand what can be the aim, as far as the definite policy of the State is concerned, of the imperialistic and bellicose outpourings of the Fascist Press. We do not think that the King of Italy can wish to emulate the ex-Kaiser, or that the Italy of Mussolini can dream of any form of imperial hegemony.

A strong State, then, but not militarist, nor despotic, nor plutocratic . . . The sources of strength in a State are primarily the excellence and stability of its institutions, its respect for tradition, concord among its citizens, government by free and genuine popular consent, ordered and increasing participation of the whole people in political power, proportionate development of the economic system and labour, a high standard of general culture, a religion practised and profoundly felt. Such is the ideal of the strong State that Italy should follow, since she is and cannot be other than a *great pacific nation*.

§ 46. *Conclusion*

The irremediable contradiction between the character and aims of Fascism and the natural and historical mission of the Kingdom of Italy, as it has evolved from the time of its formation to the present day, seems to the present writer self-evident. If, moreover, we consider Italian Fascism in the light of the general situation of post-war Europe, we can but affirm once again that it is an abnormal phenomenon which will disappear as Europe, recovering from the effects of the war, gradually attains the necessary conditions for peace, economic equilibrium and the prevalence of the democratic *régime*.

As an abnormal phenomenon Fascism is a war product which found in Italy circumstances propitious to the conquest of power ; this was due principally to the decadence of the political class which not only failed to offer any resistance, but favoured the new movement to the point of surrendering all dignity and even the seats of government. Fascism owes its success to the attitude of the wealthy and conservative classes which, thanks to this new force, have maintained their hold on the powers of the State, overcoming the Socialists on the one hand and the Popolari on the other.

This revolutionary attitude on the part of the conservatives merely continues the tactics they have constantly

employed in order to preserve their hold on the policy of the country. Thus they were Liberal Conservatives during the predominance of the Left, and are Fascist Conservatives in the 'New Era'.

The persistence, under varying political forms, of a conservative domination in revolutionary guise, does not mean that power has ever been held by a real Conservative Party, responsible for its actions and with a programme to be defended against the other parties. Its predominance has been reached through the medium of the men, parties, and ideologies which, at a given moment, have met with success and risen to the top.

This was possible only through a species of dictatorship, masked or apparent; Italy's real dictators have been Cavour under the method of liberty, Depretis and Giolitti under the method of transformism, Mussolini under the method of reaction. Crispi was said to have a dictator's fist, but in spite of appearances he was less of a dictator than any of them, or was so only in so far as he failed to escape from the influence of the conservative classes.

At the centre or on the apex of the conservative classes stands the Dynasty, which has also known its phases of Liberalism, Transformism and Fascism. In Italy the Monarchy has always been known as constitutional and, from 1848 onwards, the Kings of the House of Savoy were constitutional in the accepted sense of the word—that is, reigning but not governing, personally non-responsible, with responsible Ministers. The first King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II, earned the title of *Il Re Galantuomo* because he kept faith to the Constitution, at a time when other Italian Kings and Princes went back on their word and repudiated it. But the manner of the 'Royal Conquest' by which the unity of Italy was achieved, the conception of Italy as a military State and the ally of the Central Empires, the exercise of political power for sixty-five years by an electorate restricted, under a property qualification, to a single class—universal suffrage

was attained only in 1913—could result only in binding the Dynasty to the conservative classes. The Conservatives have been and are the mainstay of the Monarchy. Only on the day when Mussolini threw aside his republican leanings could he secure their unconditional support and thus his own triumph.

Had there been no war, Italy might still have had a disguised dictator in the person of Giolitti, or of others of his stamp, until the new forces, the parties with a following among the masses, came into their own. Even so, if the House of Savoy had linked its destinies with those of the conservative classes, the existence of the Monarchy might have been called in question.

This the Conservatives felt instinctively when the Socialists, on the one hand, and the Popolari, on the other, were bringing the working and middle classes, consciously organized, into economic and political life. Therefore, they did not hesitate to throw themselves into the arms of a revolution, confident that the Monarchy would uphold them in the hour of danger. The duel was not fought out, for the organized parties, the Socialists and the Popolari, did not give decisive battle. They were deceived as to the nature and bearings of the Fascist phenomenon, judging it only as something abnormal and therefore transitory, and failing to see that, in substance, it was the political agency of the conservative classes.

Thus three forces are united, the conservative classes, the Monarchy, and Fascism, the last armed with dictatorial power, acting as the political agency of the two former. It is only natural that Fascism should seek to assimilate all the forces of the nation, including the army, to which it has juxtaposed the National Militia—that is to say, a party militia—and the economic system, to which it has given a party form of corporate organization in order to subject it to a system of State paternalism.

Centralization, which has corroded the modern continental State, is thus carried to its logical extreme. The

State is become Leviathan, assimilating every other force, the embodiment of an oppressive political pantheism. There is no longer any room for man, for the free individual, for the sake of whom State and Society exist. Instead, man exists for the sake of the State. The apotheosis of the State or, as it is now called, the Nation, is complete. In practice, and in the Fascist conception, the State is the Government. Hence the necessity of securing the power to the Dictator and his Party, and thus to the classes of which the Dictator and his Party are the political agents. The head of the Government is responsible to the King alone, but the King is no longer morally free to change the head of the Government since he no longer finds in the political edifice an element of counterthrust on which to lean in effecting the change. Here is an abnormal innovation no longer in conformity with the historical tradition of the Kingdom of Italy. It is the starting point for the Second Risorgimento. For the First Risorgimento ended with the abolition of the conservative Constitution of Charles Albert, and with the creation of a morally and politically irremovable head of the executive power.

When one reads the chorus of praise, the homage, the adulation rising to Mussolini from various bodies and from representative men of Italy, and even from a section of the world abroad which still approves of his methods, one has the impression that, in the mind of the people, certain figures and symbols are being subtly displaced by others. Mussolini is Dictator, though without the Crown. . . .

Against this historical development stands its opposite, the participation, with a certain degree of autonomy, of the middle and working classes in political power. During the Risorgimento the Mazzinians, Republicans, Federalists, and Neo-Guelphs who, in their different ways, expressed the antithesis to the conservative currents and to the Monarchical and unitary conception, and represented more closely popular tendencies, were mostly assimilated or

destroyed in the attainment of Italian unity and independence by means of the Royal Conquest. The remainder formed the groups of the Left and the Opposition, and later on gave birth to the Radical and Workers' Parties.

On the fall of the Right in 1876, the transformist Left, acting on behalf of the middle classes, fulfilled a part of the social aspirations of the masses, but though they felt their pressure, took care to withhold political power from the masses themselves. This pressure became urgent through the Socialist Party which, however, did not attain real political efficiency until the grant of universal suffrage in 1913 and of P.R. in 1919. The latter year saw the rise of the Popular Party, which competed with the Socialists and neutralized their strength. But this was the moment when the post-war economic and political difficulties reached their height. We have seen how the old political class had reached a crisis ; how it feared the free and autonomous participation of the people in power, their growing political consciousness, their organization in parties and trade unions, and how it feared too their errors and vagaries. Having neither strength to resist this movement nor belief in its future, the old political class preferred the adventure of Fascism and the sacrifice of constitutional liberty.

The defeat of the Socialist parties and the Popular Party is the result not only of the Fascist reaction in 1925, but also, as we have seen, of their position in the period between 1919 and 1922. In brief, the Socialists by persisting in their refusal to share in the Government for fear of losing the confidence of the masses, and by proclaiming a revolution which they did not and could not carry out, forfeited the fruits of their thirty years of labour. The Popolari, on the other hand, caught in the toils of participation in the Government, to which they had assented in order to defend the country from the Bolshevist currents and to safeguard the existence of Parliament itself, were bound, in a certain measure, to share the fate of the decaying political class,

bearing at one and the same time its responsibilities and its attacks.

But both Socialists and Popolari, from different and opposed standpoints, counted on the political maturity of the masses and on their power of resistance ; but these proved unequal to the reactionary offensive.

Here is the knot of the present situation in Italy, making of the future a source of anxiety and of present events food for meditation. It would seem that the situation to-day is a repetition of the situation at the time of the Risorgimento, which was the work of the intellectual and wealthy classes rather than of the people. To-day, when the suppression of every dissenting force and every independent current of thought may be considered complete, the people of Italy look on, silent and timorous, while others form a chorus round the triumphal car of the victor. True, these seem an innumerable host only because the places where they assemble are small, and because their shouts divert attention from the silence of those who mutely stand by ; but even so, they cannot be accounted few.

The Socialist Party is re-organizing ; the Popular Party is re-organizing. Many have fallen by the wayside or have left the field. Others are abroad. Others have withdrawn from the struggle, considering the plight of their families. Such parties can no longer play an active part ; they serve merely as signs of protest and as guide posts for the future. The same applies to the other ever dwindling Opposition and anti-Fascist groups which have taken the old names of Liberals and Democrats.

What remains of their past is a banner and a programme. Their aspiration is that the middle and working classes of Italy should regain their autonomy and personality and once more do battle for a share in political power and in the policy of their country.

The Fascisti seek the total elimination of these centres of resistance from the new national life ; but these parties and groups seek to live on so as to renew the struggle

when the moment comes. No matter whether in their present form or in others more suitable, the anti-Fascist groups and parties will persist, even if they are suppressed by decree, for they discharge a social function. The people, it is true, remains inert, but it feels the need to have about it a means of defence, an issue from crises and convulsions, a haven in time of storm.

Yet the people, which to-day seems to look on passively, finds no impulse to act or react in the names of the discomfited men and parties, for neither in their programmes nor in their tactics does it see anything that could be the starting point or goal of fresh action.

In fact, parliamentary action is over ; the moral question has become confused with the system and *régime* ; economic problems are pressing, but they are absorbed or neutralized by certain forms of prosperity ; the question of constitutional liberty is keenly felt only by the political classes and parties, not by the masses who had never reached the point of sharing actively and positively in political life. Moreover, the novelty of Fascist enterprises, the large output of laws, the exalted tone of propaganda and the harangues on the Roman Empire, are bewildering, tending to create belief in an imaginary life and to foster a state of mind of messianic expectation.

This period calls for reflection, for the husbanding of strength, for the cautious avoidance of hazardous adventures, for the formation of reliable nuclei, for the elaboration of necessary reforms with a view to a democratic renaissance. Italy's *institutional problem* will have to be brought back into the foreground ; it will be necessary to face in its entirety the unsolved problem left by the Risorgimento—the problem, that is, of the complete participation of the people in political life, which was raised, each in his own way, by Mazzini, by Cattaneo, and then successively by the Radicals, the Socialists, and the Christian Democrats, afterwards the Popular Party.

This problem, the present dictatorship has to-day

made more acute, but it is inherent in the Kingdom of Italy. The constitutional form of the new Kingdom was only a means for the conquest of independence and unity, and never achieved the true substance of liberty or a truly democratic *régime*. Hence, under the parliamentary formula, oligarchies and dictatorships have grown up, culminating in the last, which has trampled down even the outward forms of constitutionalism and openly set up an armed organization.

Now every party in disagreement with the present state of things, and conceiving of political life as the active participation of the people in the work of government, every party conscious of having survived the abrogation of the Albertine Constitution, and not having been identified with it, would do well to reconsider the problem of true democracy, such as it may be realized in Italy to-morrow, and to prepare for this event which cannot fail to come about.

But to do so, such parties must reconsider much of their own past and appraise it in relation to the events of Italian life from the Risorgimento till to-day. Then will it be seen that a fundamental error, of which the consequences are now graver than ever, was made in the system of State centralization, the subjection of all local life to political power and the suppression of all regional traditions and self-government. Citizens who are not free to govern themselves in their native place, who are not accustomed to direct responsibility in local life, who do not practice social self-control, who lack training in the exercise of power in their own region, are no longer capable of independent, free and responsible participation in national life. Vice versa, the men in the Government or the Civil Service, who are accustomed to govern and direct everything, concentrating local power in a few hands, controlling and encroaching upon the whole of provincial and regional life, not only believe that others are incapable of government but that the encroachments of the central power are indispensable. And the central power, once

entered upon the road of State intervention, pursues it to the end, ever increasing in extent and intensity, and finally resulting in oligarchies and dictatorships.

Nor is this enough. The institutional question must be faced anew. The present writer has long upheld the extension of universal suffrage to women, Proportional Representation, an elective Senate. But it is necessary to reconsider even the question of the Monarchy—whether in Italy, the form most favourable to the advent of democracy is that of Monarchy or Republic. The question was never raised before the war ; there were still too many Kings and Emperors in Europe, and it is only just to recognize that in the attainment of Italian unity, the Monarchy played its part. Since the war republican experiments in Europe have multiplied, and the democratic impulse has progressed, but on the other hand in the countries where the constitution is weak, reactionary oligarchies have been either created or strengthened. Is it a problem grown acute with Fascism, or was it in existence before ? Is it to-day seen more clearly only because it has been thrown into greater relief ?

Finally, the problem of the trade unions must be faced, for the attempt to solve it by the recognition of the monopolistic Fascist corporations in a setting of State paternalism, does not meet the requirements of modern economic life, either in Italy or elsewhere. At the same time the old type of free trade union, at the mercy of parties, with no other guarantee than the right to strike, cannot long suffice. All trade unions must have a legal personality, the right to representation, and responsibility for their actions. Economic arbitration should come as the result of direct organization rather than of State coercion and intervention. The unions, both of workers and employers, should share in the free play of economic forces with their own responsibilities and safeguards, but should have no privileges nor yet be reduced to dependence on the State.

On these three hinges—decentralization and local autonomy, the institutional problem, the freedom and

responsibility of trade unions—may be hung, a new democracy, which, whenever a crisis makes its coming possible, will be able to face reaction.

In face of those who for three years have proclaimed the 'revolution' and armed themselves with the 'rights of revolution', we must repudiate all revolution based on violence and all revolutionary rights running counter to the moral law. Otherwise Italy would be dragged in a grievous chain of struggles and civil wars, with the sanguinary alternation of factions in place of the free alternation of parties.

But when the changing of the present Fascist order and the revision of institutions becomes possible, their revision will be a patriotic duty that not even force may hinder. For when a question enters into the consciousness of the people it cannot long remain without solution.

The Italian Popular Party has always opposed State centralization and raised the questions of local autonomy, trade unionism and the reform of the Senate. It has never considered the monarchical question. Yet even the first two questions which were raised in the teeth of the Democratic-Liberal—in substance, Conservative—tradition, were considered chiefly from their administrative and economic side and only secondarily from their political side. Now they appear purely political in relation to the question whether *and by what means the future of Italy can be made one of democracy.*

In post-war Europe discussion continues whether parliamentary institutions will be able to survive the discredit into which they are fallen, and their impotence to solve the great moral, economic, political, and social problems facing the nations.

Those who denounce parliamentary institutions and call for dictatorships do not perceive that these problems are in themselves, grave, difficult, complex, and even insoluble, and that the fault does not lie with the political instruments if when a solution is found it is neither speedy, nor complete,

and perhaps not even acceptable. Dictatorships where they have been established, only displace the terms of the problems and complicate them with all the perilous consequences resulting from the loss of the safety-valves afforded by political liberties.

With all this, not only must we not deny, but we must recognize that parliamentary institutions themselves evolve, in accordance with the evolution of the political, economic, moral, and social conditions of the peoples. We therefore, assert definitely that democracy, the spirit and form of modern *régimes*, can neither be pinned down to a formula nor bound up with a system, but must develop and adapt itself to the conditions of life among modern peoples. Moreover—apart from the phenomenon of the Great War and its vast consequences in every field—the present crises show up the flaws in the democratic structure so far achieved, and point the way to suitable reform. Such a reform will have to combine the spirit of liberty with the strengthening of authority, the recognition of the individual with the play of forces of the various social groups, and moral values with the requirements of the material life of the peoples.

The painful experiments in dictatorship and oligarchy of certain of the European Nations, and, more especially, of Italy, will help to create a love of political liberties combined with clearer intellectual convictions and greater ardour of sacrifice ; and at the same time it will help to educate the people for a wider and more responsible participation in political life.

This implies at once rights and duties, activities and responsibilities, tradition and initiative, conviction and tolerance. Modern Democracy must seek to raise the whole people and not a single section, faction, caste, or class—so that it may take part in the life of the collectivity with ever increasing keenness.

But every nation has its own character, its own history, its own place in the complexity of international life. When

each comes to know its position, to value it, to fulfil it as best it can, and to put forth all its strength to maintain it, it will then have best achieved its end. We have seen what is the rôle of Italy, and how great the need—for her own sake and that of international life—for a democratic Italy.

Democracy is not a levelling of individual values, nor is it a levelling of collective and national values. On the contrary, it is the highest, the loftiest co-operation of individual values with a view to ever more general ends.

And for those of us who believe in the perennial virtue of Christianity in the life of peoples, Democracy must be always permeated with the Christian spirit, which is at once a spirit of liberty, a spirit of communion of goods, a spirit of love embracing all classes and all peoples. Therefore do we believe in the developments and ultimate triumph of a *Christian Democracy*.

This is the ideal of the Popolari in Italy. In spite of difficulties, struggles, set-backs, sacrifices, they will not falter in their task—to bring about the triumph of Democracy over oligarchy, and of the parliamentary *régime* over dictatorship.

Certainly the Popolari will not be alone in this arduous task, but they cannot forsake it, if Italy is not to fall either into anticlericalism on the Left or under socialist predominance, and if balance is to be maintained between all the democratic movements.

And one thing is sure, and corresponds to the profound consciousness underlying modern civilization—that even in Italy the time must come when the advent of a peaceful and progressive Democracy, recognizing all parties in accordance with the ‘method of liberty’, will restore Italy to her proper place as a centre of moral and artistic life, of religious and juridical thought, of activity in labour and commerce, as a factor in international equilibrium, so that she may play her true part as a GREAT PACIFIC NATION.

THE END

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